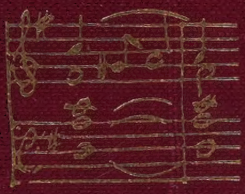
OF THE SINGER

W. J. HENDERSON



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THE ART OF THE SINGER

PRACTICAL HINTS ABOUT VOCAL TECHNICS AND STYLE

BY

W. J. HENDERSON

NEW YORK
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1913

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To

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MASTERSINGER

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PREFATORY NOTE

In the course of a long and earnest study of the art of the singer the author of this volume has read all the authoritative works bearing on the topic; has made a special and searching investigation into the records of the teaching and singing of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—the formative period; and the eighteenth century—the cumulative period of the art; has made a large number of experiments with voices; has observed the methods of many teachers; has heard and studied the famous singers of the past quarter of a century, and has obtained from some of them valuable instruction.

He desires to express his indebtedness for important information to Mesdames

Nordica and Sembrich, and for practical demonstrations of a worth beyond estimate by M. Jean de Reszke. He also owes thanks to Mr. Howard Brown, of New York City, for enlightening physiological illustrations of the operation of the larynx.

The author hopes that in this volume the teacher, the student and the lover of singing will find set forth in a clear and comprehensible manner what he has been able to learn in twenty-five years of careful study.

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THE ART OF THE SINGER

I

WHAT IS SINGING?

SINGING is the interpretation of text by means of musical tones produced by the human voice.

This is a definition. It ought also to be a self-evident proposition. But it is not. Go where you will among singers and listen to their talk and you will hear an endless reiteration of one thought—how best to produce beautiful tones. It is not at all astonishing that this should be the case because the method of tone-formation presents problems of imme-

diate import to the singer. If he cannot fathom the secrets of his own throat he must stop at the very threshold of his art. When he essays to sing he discovers that certain tones refuse to flow, that they are veiled, or that his throat is unduly strained in their delivery. Something is wrong with the method.

Again he sets out on the weary search for a voice-teacher. Again he finds one who has rediscovered the secret of Porpora. Again he trudges through weary pages of solfeggi.

At length he tries once more to sing songs, and lo! now he has troubles with tones which before flowed spontaneously.

This is a very sad and common experience among singers. No wonder that they think and talk altogether of the art of tone-production.

Yet from this custom a grave misfor-

tune comes upon the art of song. The edifice stops too often with its foundation. We get tone, tone, and tone. Singing becomes *vox et præterea nihil.* All the world is a music-box and all the men and women merely tinklers. The human voice is treated purely as a musical instrument, and it performs melodies inarticulately, as a violin does. Nine tenths of the songs we hear are songs without words. And when we do hear the words they are either mangled in the formation or neglected in the matter of significance. We are furnished with little books containing the texts of the songs to be sung. These little books are useful to those who do not understand the language in which the texts of the songs are written. They ought not to have any other use. When they are employed to tell us what is the meaning of the song which the singer

is singing, they are a confession of great weakness.

The listener who does not understand the text of a song to which he is listening is as much at sea as an audience at a college commencement listening to the Greek salutatory. Give the audience a printed translation of the salutatory, and you put them in the position of the listeners with the texts of the songs. A part of the cause of this trouble lies in the lack of general acquaintance with German, Italian, and French. But an audience listening to songs with English texts is as much at sea most of the time as it is when the other languages are employed. That is the singer's fault.

It is a fault which begins with the singer's award of the first place in his consideration to beauty of tone. It is both right and wrong that he should do

this. This was sometime a paradox, but now it is a truism.

The public, the unthinking public, is perfectly content to accept what the majority of singers gives it,—beautiful tone, the intoning of melodic sequences by the voice. But that is not singing any more than striking all the keys correctly is piano playing.

Singing is the interpretation of text by means of musical tones produced by the human voice.

Hence the force of the paradox. If the tones are not beautiful they cannot be musical. Therefore it is right that the singer should first learn to make musical tones. But if he stop there, he is wrong. He must use the tones to interpret the text. It is no concern whatever of the real artist that his hearers are willing to accept half a loaf. He must insist upon the dignity of his art.

He must refuse to allow the burial of its intellectuality.

To sing mere sounds is a senseless performance no matter how much those sounds tickle the ears of the dear public, no matter how large the price paid the singer for their utterance.

And it is the artist who must educate the public. Critics may write till doomsday, but their efforts must continually prove futile in the presence of the deeds of the exponents of the art. Of what avail is it that the critics cease not to preach that the singing of a Melba is not to be compared with that of a Sembrich, as long as Melba continues to sing as she does and to enchant the unthinking with the mere tones of her ravishing voice? A few singers of the Melba type can do in a year evil which two or three Sembrichs and Lehmanns cannot undo in six.

The opera, indeed, is a wholesale destroyer of high ideals of song. Two-thirds of the people who attend it do not make the slightest attempt to find out what the singers are saying, and content themselves with drinking in the merely sensuous elements of vocal music. It is no wonder that many opera-singers become slothful. Others, whose enunciation is most admirable, substitute mere articulation for interpretation.

There is a vast difference between the two.

The evils of mere sound singing come from a misconception of the nature of song. If every singer would write on the tablets of his mind the definition of singing given herewith it would be a happy thing for vocal art. Let it be a daily maxim: Singing is the interpretation of text by means of musical tones

produced by the human voice. Let it be understood that in song, as in the Wagnerian drama, the music is not the end, but a means. The radical error of the entire Italian school of singing, despite its proclamation of other belief, lay in the fact that in actual practice it held that the ultimate purpose of vocal technic was the production of beautiful tone. The fundamental truth is that the object of vocal technic is the vitalization of text by musical tone, and that the creation of the tone must be for that purpose and that alone.

I have already shown that the pure beauty of song cannot be diminished by a practice based upon this theory. Unmusical tone is wholly excluded by the primary definition of singing. There is no dispute that a pure musical tone formed by the human throat has beauty. The secrets of the Italian method, if it

had any secrets, are applicable to the highest forms of interpretative singing. Indeed, no singer can accomplish all that is within the scope of his voice in the matter of interpretation unless that voice is perfectly disciplined. Even the mastery of colorature is absolutely essential to perfection. For example, who can sing "Glockenthümer's Töchterlein" or "Aufträge" without the training of the colorature school?

In short, we have arrived at that period in the development of vocal art when we may look upon the splendid technical achievements of the eighteenth century and the early part of the nineteenth as the necessary foundations of a vocal art. But they were not the whole of it. They possessed the potentialities, and enabled certain gifted individuals—the Farinellis, the Senesinos, the Pastas, and the Malibrans—to produce

moving effects. But the Italian opera schools of these times lacked a perception of the elementary truth which forced its way to recognition with the spread of the songs of Schubert and Schumann and with the gradual ascent to supremacy of the dramas of Wagner.

That elementary truth is contained in the definition of singing offered herewith.

II

THE ARTIST AND THE PUBLIC

To hear the singing teachers talk, one would think that every one and no one possessed the true Italian school. Each teacher claims it, and vehemently denies that any one else knows anything about it. Of course the explanation of this state of affairs is that some one is deficient in regard for the truth. But there is another cause for the apparently contradictory statements, and that is pure ignorance. There are many teachers of singing in these days who know as much about the right schooling of the voice as they do about the establishment of secondary meridians or about suggestive therapeutics.

Teachers or no teachers, it is plain to every careful observer that the race of beautiful singers is diminishing with every year, and that in its place there is growing up a generation of harsh, unrefined, tuneless shouters, whom we are asked to accept as dramatic impersonators on the lyric stage, because of a particularly vigorous style of declamation or a significant facial expression. Meanwhile our own ears are becoming vitiated and many of us are complacently listening to the worst sort of singing out of tune and applauding it as if infidelity to the pitch were an evidence of independent conception. We sit calmly while a leading tenor produces as many different qualities of voice as registers, bleats in his lower tones, swallows half of his upper ones, and gurgles in all. We are perfectly content that a contralto shall hold a

leading place while she never sustains any tone or attacks one directly, but is always sliding through infinitesimal degrees of pitch as if her voice were on skates. And when we do hear a soprano who not only gives us the dramatic meaning of the music which she sings, but sings every measure with a beautiful tone, we applaud her no more than we do another who rarely sings in tune and always with a sour quality.

Whose fault is it that the public is so woefully deficient in discrimination? The public is not an expert, never was, and never will be. It does not go beneath the surface in the world of what it is pleased to call amusements. It is idle, careless, and indifferent to the critical questions of art. If it is amused for the moment it is satisfied. The performer is paid and applauded, and so, "on with the dance." If the artist be

frivolous, flippant, unskilled, the education of the facile public down to his level is his work, and he is to be blamed for it. The maintenance of a high standard of art is the duty of the artist. If he waits for the public to undertake this work he will see his art go to the dogs.

The public has always had to be led and always will have to be led by the men and women of genius. Did the public in ante-Calvé times ever demand that "Carmen" should be interpreted as Calvé used to interpret it? Did the public ever demand that "Tristan" should be sung as Jean de Reszke sang it until he showed that that was the way it ought to be sung? No, the leader in artistic matters must always be the artist. And so bad singers lead the public to endure and even to applaud bad singing.

There is a good deal of loose argu-

ment against method in these days. It begins with some such utterance as that which Fétis made half a century ago when he wrote: "The mechanical part of singing, even the most perfect, is an indispensable part of the merit of a good singer, but it is not all. The most successful delivery of the voice, the best regulated respiration, the purest execution of the ornaments, and what is very rare, the most perfect intonation, are the means by which a great singer expresses the sentiment which animates him, but they are nothing more than means, and he who should persuade himself that the whole art of the singer is comprised in them might sometimes give his audience a degree of tranquil pleasure, but would never cause them to experience vivid emotion."

This is perfectly true, but it is not

true that because the purity of the vocal method is only a means it can be sacrificed for the sake of a warmth of temperament, a knowledge of styles, a fine diction, or a complete understanding of the significance of a song. The first business of a singer is to sing. That means to deliver to the hearer the notes set down by the composer, not some other note or notes an eighth of a tone above or below those set down. The singer is bound to deliver the notes just as firmly as he is bound to deliver the words of the text and not those of some other text. In the second place, he is under obligations to deliver them purely, in a good round tone, free from harshness, breathiness, or any other bad quality, which should distract the attention of the sensitive listener from the poetry of the words and music. This is a plain and unadorned statement of the

primary obligations of the singer, yet how many fulfil them? Are we to believe that there was once an age of vocal fable, or is it really true that there were once singers of a far different sort from the vast majority of those we hear now?

It is said that Farinelli cured Philip of Spain of an attack of melancholia which threatened his reason. He did it by singing beautifully. Raff is said to have brought the relief of tears to the Princess Belmont when her sanity was in danger because of immense grief. Senesino, a great singer, once forgot his own part, and on the stage threw his arms around the neck of Farinelli after that singer had sung an air with surpassing beauty. Gabrielli broke down with emotion on the stage after hearing Marchesi sing a cantabile. Crescentini, when he sang in "Romeo

and Juliet," caused the grim Napoleon and all his court to shed tears.

Is it true that these singers knew something which is now a lost art? I for one do not believe it. It is my firm conviction that the acquisition of a beautiful vocal style is in the power of any one who will take the trouble to go through the necessary study.

There is the rub. The necessary study is the one thing that so few are willing to undertake. The ignorant, when they hear a woman like Madame Sembrich sing, say: "Oh, what a voice!" The voice, the voice, the gift of God, is praised, and the art, which is the result of long and hard and sometimes bitterly painful struggle, is not discerned. Thousands of persons imagine that singing such as Madame Sembrich's is a pure gift. To a certain extent the bounty of nature is to be thanked for

such music as this woman gives us, for it is not possible by any process of teaching to manufacture such a voice. But if Madame Sembrich's art were not perfect, she would not always sing beautifully, no matter how lovely the natural voice, and, furthermore, the natural beauty of her voice would long ago have been destroyed. Ten years of reckless, unmethodical use of such a voice would take all the velvet off it and leave us only the rags of what once was.

It is hard, it is almost impossible, to make the young singers of to-day believe this. They all laugh when the old story of Caffarelli and Porora is told, but that tale, exaggerated though it be, carries with it a sound text. Patience, devotion, sincerity. These must be the watchwords of the student of singing. The planting is slow and laborious; the harvest long and rich.

Let the student approach the portals of the divine art with all humility, prepared to linger on the threshold till the first step can be firmly taken. Jacob served seven years for Rachel and then served seven more. Jean de Reszke served twenty years' apprenticeship for his *Siegfried* and his *Tristan,* and his memory will live as long as the art of song.

III

FUNDAMENTAL BREATHING

THE first thing a singer must learn is how to control his breath. Every one breathes and most of us find it no effort to do so. But try to sing and you discover that you must first acquire a system of managing the breath. If you have no system your tones are unsteady or they refuse to cling to the pitch. Your phrases are broken. Your singing is labored and spasmodic. You are an organ pipe fed by defective bellows.

In this, the fundamental feature of vocal technics, there are as many differences among professors as in the later details of the art. All the teachers agree that good tone production, which

is the basis of all good singing, rests upon the management of the breath, and that it is therefore essential that every pupil should acquire a correct method of breathing. The teacher, when asked what he means by a correct method of breathing, will tell you that he means one which is in accord with nature, which is not artificial or strained. After that comes the deluge. You would not suppose that there could be more than one such method, but you will find by inquiry that there are several.

One set of masters will tell you that in order to draw in your breath according to the laws of nature you must begin by causing your abdomen to protrude in order that your diaphragm may have room to operate. The next set will tell you that this is radically wrong, and that in beginning an inspiration you

should contract the muscles of the abdomen, causing it to flatten. Another set will tell you to pay no attention at all to your breathing, but just get as much air as you can into your lungs and then go ahead and sing.

After you have drawn in the breath, you have to expel it, because it is with the expulsion of the air from the lungs through the vocal cords that tone comes. Here again the different schools of teachers will tell you different ways of doing it. One set will say that when you begin the expulsion of the breath you must push out the abdomen and forcibly contract the muscles of your sides around the lower ribs.

Another set will tell you that this is rank heresy and that you will never be able to support your tones if you try to breathe in such a crazy manner. This set will tell you that in beginning the ex-

pulsion of the breath you must forcibly flatten the abdomen and give a good hard push with the diaphragm.

Again you will be told that in sustaining the tone thus begun you must permit your chest to sink gradually, keeping up a steady pressure upon the lungs with the intercostal muscles. Another party will urge you not to let your chest sink at all, but resolutely to raise it higher and higher as the air flows out of the lungs, thus keeping the tone pure and even. You pay your money, but you have great difficulty in taking your choice.

Among these different schools the student is like to be ground as wheat between millstones. He studies, let us say for a year with one master and is dissatisfied with his progress. He goes to another and is told that everything he does is wrong from the foundation up.

He has to learn a wholly new method of breathing, of tone support, of voice placement, etc. He begins to think that singing is an abnormal art that is not founded on nature at all; that it is all a matter of theory and artificiality, and from that moment he is as much adrift as a rudderless and dismasted ship in a gale of wind.

Nevertheless, if one takes the trouble to read about the teaching of the older masters, whose pupils certainly knew how to sing, he finds little disagreement in regard to the matter of breathing. Most of the old teachers had not a great deal to say about it. They seemed to believe that if one systematically practiced drawing in deep breaths and letting them out slowly, turning every bit into tone, the power to breathe in just that necessary way would eventually be acquired. Curiously enough we

find some rational and careful observers, who are not tied to any pet master's theory, thinking just the same thing in our own day. Most of them have come down the Garcia line.

It would be interesting to know how many teachers of the present time have ever made attempts to proceed empirically and at the same time systematically. Take this matter of breathing. The right way to find out how best to breathe in producing tone is not to decide first how you should breathe and then make tones accordingly, but to make tones till you find out how they can be made best.

Suppose a teacher of singing should take a sound, healthy, well-developed, athletic young man of some seventeen or eighteen years with a good natural voice, strip him and stand him up and say to him, "Sing this note as clearly

and as gently and as long as you can, but without straining." Then when the young man sang, suppose the teacher should carefully observe the play of his form, the movements of his abdomen and chest, and find out how that youth, having no theories and no intentions about breathing, inspired and expelled air in the formation of tone.

Suppose the teacher were to continue that process with fifty or a hundred young people, would he not be likely to have a far sounder basis for the foundation of a belief as to the right way to breathe in singing than by reading the arguments of theorists backed by diagrams (not always correct) of the skeleton and lungs?

It is safe to say that the teacher who tries this sort of empiricism will learn that the abdomen is not forcibly pushed forward in inspiration. He will also

learn that in expiration the abdomen does not protrude, as it is made to appear to do in a misleading diagram in Lamperti's recently published and generally excellent book, "The Technics of Bel Canto."

To make the abdomen protrude in expiration requires a special effort of the will, a concentration on the act of breathing and a deliberate perversion of nature. Let nature alone and she will in the end flatten the walls of the abdomen in breathing. The reasons are easily set forth.

The principal muscle used in respiration is the diaphragm, a dome-shaped partition extending across the trunk between the chest and the abdominal cavity. When you draw in breath the diaphragm contracts and at the same time presses downward upon the abdominal cavity. This causes the abdomen natu-

rally to expand, but it is not forcibly pushed out. In fact, it pushes itself forward, but only at the beginning of the inspiration. As the lower ribs by muscular action expand, the lower parts of the lungs are filled and this expansion of the lower portion of the chest draws up the abdomen a little till the first protrusion almost disappears.

When you exhale the breath the muscles of the abdominal walls contract and press against the viscera, which in turn press against the diaphragm, pushing it upward and thus causing the cavity of the chest to diminish. Of course in this process the abdominal wall flattens.

In the practice of deep breathing, after the lungs have been filled the air should be retained for two or three seconds before exhalation. This retention is not to be accomplished by closing the vent in the larynx.

That method is correct for a diver, but it is incorrect for a singer, because it is contrary to the fundamental rule that there should never be any tightness or gripping anywhere. It calls for a conscious muscular strain in the throat and there should never be any strain there. The breath must be retained simply by the action of the diaphragm and rib muscles. The throat must be kept lax and open. All the breathing muscles must be held firmly in the position which they naturally take when the inspiration is completed, and by that power and that alone must the breath be retained. In exhalation the distended lungs must begin their contraction wholly by the release of the inhalation pose of the muscles. No push need be applied till the point is reached at which natural contraction ceases. Then the student may will to expel still more

breath by the operation of the diaphragm and other muscles.

The fundamental secret of breathing in singing is to breathe deeply and easily and to keep the breath under perfect control. The singer need not concern himself with the operation of the muscles. Let him fix his mind on learning to draw in breath steadily without effort till his lungs are filled and then to let the breath flow out again easily, steadily and softly. As David Frangçon-Davies has very wisely said in his "The Singing of the Future," one should learn to emit just enough breath to make a whisper, and then convert it into a tone. This is what the old Italian masters meant when they continually told their pupils to learn how to "filar il tuono," or "spin the tone." The air should flow out in a gossamer filament.

Now, if a student concentrates his

mind on this and practises breathing it is a thousand to one that the muscles of the body will take care of themselves. Unless they have been deliberately taught to do the thing incorrectly they will go about it in the right way. It is necessary to know what is the right way in order that we may ascertain whether we have acquired the wrong way.

But the teacher who causes his pupil to draw a few deep breaths and let them out slowly, and finds that Nature has been permitted to take her own course, makes a grievous error if he launches into a demonstration of breathing method. Salvatore Marchesi has wisely said: "When explaining the physico-mechanical process of breathing to beginners it is essential to make them understand that natural laws have provided for its independence of our will, as is observed in sleeping. Therefore

every intentional preparation or effort made in order to draw more air into the lungs will produce the contrary result, hindering the freedom of the natural process."

You will read many hundreds of pages of type on the subject of singing without finding anything more pregnant with good sense than this. The great point on which the student should focus his thought is not the direction of the muscles in breathing, but the acquisition of a deep, steady respiration and the ability to keep the outgoing column of air under perfect control. That is the beginning of singing. It is the foundation on which all else rests.

If you cannot manage your breath you can never acquire a pure, steady, even flow of tone, the basis of what is called *cantilena.* If you have no cantilena you are no singer. You may suc-

ceed in becoming a declaimer of the vicious Baireuth type, but you will never breathe out the love song of *Siegmund* or the farewell of *Wotan,* the narrative of *Waltraute* or the liebestod of *Isolde.*

Much less will you ever sing the "Voi che sapete" or "Batti batti" of Mozart or the "Roi de Thule" of Gounod or the "O mai piu" of Verdi. You can never be a singer unless you have a good legato style, for that is the bedrock of bel canto, and there is no legato without perfect breath control.

IV

BREATHING AND ATTACK

It is not enough that the singer shall merely breathe. He must breathe the breath of life into his singing. Before he can do that, he must learn to breathe with perfect freedom. The right way for singers to breathe is the way one employs when he stretches himself upon his bed for sleep and begins the steady deep breathing which invites to calm repose. This sort of breathing is diametrically opposed to violent or determined effort. It is not the sort of breathing which some athletes practise and which they call "deep breathing."

That consists in straining every mus-

cle of the torso in a prolonged and violent effort to stretch the lungs to the cracking point. Chest labor of this kind has no relationship whatever to singing. No one can control his breath and turn it all into tone if he crams his lungs in that fashion. The strain of retention would be too great and he would have to relieve the muscles of the body by blowing off some of the bottled up breath. When the athlete takes in his deep breath in that fashion he lets it out much faster and in a much bigger column than the singer.

The singer again cannot breathe as the athlete does after a race. This manner of breathing is entirely involuntary. It is an effect, not a cause. It is produced by violent physical effort, and it is characterized by a lively heaving of the chest and rising and falling of the shoulders, which will not answer at all

for singing. Clavicular breathing has no place in artistic singing. Whenever you see a singer heaving up his shoulders before the beginning of each phrase, make up your mind that there is something radically wrong with his tone formation. Listen to his attack and you will find that it invariably begins with a strangulated tone, which at the conclusion of the phrase dwindles to a wheeze. "No cantilena here" should be the sign hung over the head of every singer who employs the hoisted shoulder process in singing.

The lungs are much like a pair of bellows, and the throat is related to them as the nozzle is to the real bellows. The part of the bellows which expands and contracts most in drawing in and pushing out air is the part furthest from the nozzle, and you will find that the same thing is true of the human apparatus.

The diaphragm and the muscles of the lower ribs are the chief agents in breathing deeply and quietly.

Any heaving of the upper chest or shoulders must disturb the poise of the larynx, which contains the sounding reeds of the voice. Any disturbance of the poise of the larynx calls for some effort in the throat to offset it, and the singer should never make efforts with his throat.

It is quite true that certain throat muscles are employed in singing. But if the breathing, the attack and the tone formation are correctly conceived, these muscles will operate normally and without interference from other muscles which should not be employed. The result is a feeling of perfect freedom or relaxation. The word "relaxation" is used in this book to express a condition, not of looseness, but of absence of

tightness, which is a very different thing.

All the muscles of the throat should be easy and reposeful in good tone formation. They should not be subjected to any pulls or shocks. Singers should never be conscious of effort in the throat; they should feel it all below the throat in the muscles of the body. The whole neighborhood of the throat should be kept quiet.

Now comes the inevitable question: What is the singer to do when called upon to sing long phrases rapidly succeeding one another? How is he to draw in a good big breath without making a sudden and violent effort? Well, the answer to this is that he is not to attempt to draw in such a breath.

Madame Sembrich, who is a past mistress of sustained and smooth delivery, is a firm advocate of the use of the half

breath in singing. In other words, instead of attempting to let the whole body of air exude from the lungs and then completely replenish it, one should take half breaths before the storehouse is empty, and thus keep it occupied.

By this method a series of sustained phrases may be sung without any apparent break in the continuous flow of tone. The interruption of the stream of sound required for half a breath is very brief and will not convey any noticeable stoppage to an audience. The muscular effort needed to take half a breath is comparatively small, much less than half that needed for a quick, deep inspiration, and hence the strain on the physical organization of the singer is less and the possibility of disturbing the poise of the tone forming organ much smaller.

It must be distinctly understood that

the half breath is not to be used except when it is absolutely necessary. When the singer can advantageously get the full breath, he should take it. The object of the half breath is to prevent depletion in passages where there is not time to get a full inspiration.

We are now approaching the point at which this matter of breathing connects itself with the attack of tone, the beginning of actual singing. And here must come the final caution about breathing. The singer must never try to take in too much breath, for that will result in the trouble which Lilli Lehmann says affected her in her early days.

"I always felt," she says, "as if I must let out some of the breath before beginning to sing." Poor Nature was uttering her protest and misguided human will was trying to stifle it. Breathe

easily, opulently, but not wilfully. Let the demands of the voice, not the operation of your will govern breathing. On this vital point a quotation may be profitably made from the excellent "Philosophy of Singing," by Clara Kathleen Rogers, who was aforetime the Clara Doria of operatic note. She declaims vigorously against consciously working the diaphragm.

"What is required in breathing," she says, "is expansion without unnecessary tension. The lungs must fill themselves in proportion as the breath is exhausted under the regulation of their own law —that of action and reaction—and not by any conscious regulating of the diaphragm on the part of the singer, as this leads inevitably to a mechanical and unspontaneous production of tone.

"Singers will understand me better if

I say that there must be no holding, no tightness anywhere, but the frame of the body must remain plastic or passive to the natural acts of inhaling and exhaling, as in this way only can perfect freedom of vocal expression be obtained."

This is sound talk and should be carefully tucked away in the memory closet of every student of singing. Lilli Lehmann, in her treatise on her own way of singing, advocates a wholly different method, but her book discloses the secret that this method was devised to meet certain physical disqualifications with which Lehmann had to contend in girlhood. In other words, she acquired her manner of breathing when she was making earnest efforts to overcome a natural shortness of breath. She therefore fell into the habit of wilfully operating her breathing muscles in-

stead of permitting them to operate in response to the demands of tone.

She tells us that she breathed that way for twenty-five years, and then learned from a horn player with remarkably long wind that although he set up his diaphragm very firmly in inspiration, he relaxed it when he began to play. Madame Lehmann tried that way in singing, and says she obtained "the best results." So in the end the principle of "no holding, no tightness anywhere," came home to her.

This seems to be a suitable point at which to insert a letter from a physician who has made a special study of the physical operations of singing. He says:

"I believe the essential of proper breathing is to stand erect, with the shoulders in absolutely normal (but erect) position. This results in the elevation of the upper part of the thoracic wall, lifting the ribs so that the action of the chest is for the time

being suspended, giving free action to the diaphragm —which is the sole breath regulator in the act of singing. At the close of a series of phrases—at the end of a paragraph, if I may use such a word for descriptive purposes—in the music, where a pause of sufficient length is available, the bony walls of the chest are collapsed for the purpose of removing a modicum of carbonic-acid gas, which must of necessity accumulate and which is immediately replaced with fresh air by the restoration of the erect position before the commencement of the next act singing.

"To go beyond this in instructing a pupil is to introduce error, to substitute the conscious for what must be unconscious action to be effective and, finally and worst of all, to wallow in the sea of error which will simply be a measure of the anatomical attainments of the teacher and the teacher's judgment in a field for which no adequate training is possible.

"Shakspeare (the English teacher of music) has shown that considerable air pressure is necessary to the attainment of good quality of tone in singing. The essence of his work is the reserve quantity of breath required at the end of a phrase. It is a good feature.

"I have carefully observed the method of the greatest singers, and I believe that the above statements, simple as they are, cover the entire field, so

far as it relates to breath control. Beyond this we go into questions of natural attributes and temperament of the pupil."

Three words must ever be kept in mind when thinking of breathing in the art of song: These words are "slow," "gentle," "deep." All the old masters insisted that breathing in song should be of the character described by these three terms. If the reader desires the names of some of these masters, here they are: Nicolo Porpora, Antonio Bernacchi, Antonio Pistocchi, Leonardo Leo, Domenico Gizzi, Francesco Durante, Giuseppe Amadori and Francesco Brivio. The fundamentals of the method taught by these masters were the pure legato and sonorous, beautiful tone. To this they added training in vocal agility, but it must be ever borne in mind that this training was superimposed on a course of instruction in breathing and tone formation.

If the student has learned to breathe slowly, deeply and gently, so that he can emit from his windpipe a steady column of air which is under perfect control, he must next solve the question of the attack of tone. It is unnecessary here to enter upon a long description of the operations of the vocal cords. It will be enough to say that they are two membranous bands stretching across the upper opening of the larynx. Air expelled from the lungs and passing through these cords sets them in vibration, when they are brought close together and set taut by their muscular fibres acting under the operation of the will to make a vocal sound.

The action of the vocal cords is entirely automatic. When one breathes without desiring to speak they relax and leave a wide passage between them for the air. Sometimes they lie snugly

at rest behind the two ventricular bands which stretch across the larynx just in front of them. When the person is about to make a vocal sound the cords rush out of their hiding places and, bringing their edges close together, form a narrow slit, through which the air rushes, setting the membranes in vibration and producing sound. And that is the act of phonation.

It is the same in both speech and song. The singer, however, has a purpose different from the speaker's. The singer aims to produce a tone which shall be musical, that is, absolutely the same in pitch from beginning to end. The voice of a person speaking ranges through infinitesimal gradations of pitch. If it does not, he acquires what is graphically described as a "sing song" delivery. Furthermore, a speaker cares little whether his tone is beautiful or

not. It would add much to the joys of living if we all did think a little about our speaking voices, but we do not. Public speakers might improve vastly in this matter, but they are usually satisfied if they can make their tones big enough to reach all their hearers.

Now the singer in the search after smooth, round, musical tone, speedily finds out that the first secret is the attack, the beginning of the tone. This attack begins with what is called the stroke of the glottis, which in plain English means the flying together of the two vocal cords. If the singer thinks of the tone apart from its motor, the air column, he will fall into one or two vices: either his vocal cords will come together before the air strikes them from below, or afterward. If they do the former, the air will forcibly open

them and a little clucking sound will be caused.

This is not quite accurately described by some of the authorities on singing as the audible stroke of the glottis. It is most unbeautiful and is the most vicious form of bad attack. It occurs almost entirely on words beginning with vowels. Consonantal beginnings make it nearly impossible, or at any rate cover it up. But a passage beginning with "Ah" is likely to bring out this vice in all its ugliness. The long English E is the next sound after "Ah" to encourage it.

When once a singer has fallen into this pernicious habit of attack, it seems as if he could never rid himself of it. Women seem fonder of it than men, for some reason not clear to this writer. But it is exceedingly wearisome to hear a soprano go clucking through an opera

like a hen calling her brood. The other form of bad attack is the H form. In this bad attack the singer wills to exhale the breath before willing to make tone, and the result is that his tone begins with an aspirate. If he wishes to sing "I am lonely to-night" he perforce sings "Hi am lonely." These are the two opposites to a good attack, which consists in willing the cords to set themselves for a tone at precisely the moment when the column of air strikes them. Sir Morel Mackenzie says:

"The regulation of the force of the blast which strikes against the vocal cords, the placing of these in the most favorable position for the effect which it is desired to produce, and the direction of the vibrating column of air are the three elements of artistic production. These elements must be thoroughly coördinated—that is to say, made virtu-

ally one act, which the pupil must strive by constant practice to make as far as possible automatic."

A perfect attack is rare. Yet in our own time we have had the privilege of hearing not a few singers who possessed it. The present writer always found that one of the greatest beauties of Melba's delivery in the best days of her exquisite voice was the perfection of her attack. The technical term seems altogether unsuitable to a description of the manner in which she began a tone.

It was not an attack at all. She just opened her lips, and the tones dropped out like the pearls from the mouth of the princess in the fairy tale. Or one might liken an attack of this kind to the beginning of the flow of water when a faucet is turned. The clucking attack sounds like the lighting of gas; the

aspirated attack like the turning on of electric light in which the click of the switch always precedes the appearance of illumination.

Lehmann's attack was imperfect throughout her career. Doubtless her artificial method of breathing was at fault. At any rate, she aspirated a large percentage of those tones which had to be taken on open vowels. Caruso has a perfect attack, and he breathes with consummate ease. Therefore his tone is rich, round and sustained.

But students who observe Caruso must not forget that some of his gifts are exceptional. He possesses lung capacity far beyond the normal. He sings amazingly long phrases with apparently careless ease. No art will enable a singer to imitate him in this, for he is equipped with a most extraordinary pair of bellows.

When he does not drive great blasts out of them in the endeavor to supply the vulgar demand for huge sounds, the quality of his voice, floated on a deep and perfectly controlled stream of air, is something beautiful beyond description. As long as we have such singing we need not altogether despair of vocal technic.

V

PRACTICE IN BEGINNING TONES

An endeavor has been made to show clearly that the question of attack is not one admitting of many words. The vocal cords should set for the tone at the very instant that the column of breath moving up the windpipe strikes them. That is the secret of pure bell-like attack. The student will naturally ask how he is to know when he is getting this kind of attack. There are two ways of ascertaining. One is by one's own sensations and the other is by the report of a competent hearer. It is in the latter capacity that the trained teacher is essential. One's sensations are pretty

good guides in this particular matter, but they are deceptive in other details of singing. One cannot hear his own voice as others hear it, and the teacher is the guide whose experienced ear detects vocal error and who knows the cause of it.

However, some readers may wish to know what the sensations are. Purposely shut your throat, as if you were trying to avoid swallowing something distasteful to you, and then give a quick, smart push with your breath. Do this in a whisper. You will get a little explosive sound like the beginning of a feeble cough. This will provide you with the sensation made by bringing the vocal cords together before expelling the air.

Try the same thing again, uttering the sound "ah" when you expel the breath, and you will get the effect and sensa-

tion together. Now utter the word "halt," but make the initial "h" long, thus "h-h-h-halt." You will find that in order to do this you must blow out breath and suddenly choke it off by bringing the vocal cords together to make the "ah" sound. This will bring clearly to your notice the sensation of the aspirated attack.

In singing a word beginning with an open vowel you should not feel either of these sensations. You should feel that your lungs contain sufficient air for the formation of the tone which you are about to produce, and that the tone begins by the passing of the breath through the throat.

Attack should be practised with the minimum amount of effort. A good attack can never be acquired by practising with a big tone. The employment of a big tone presupposes the inhalation of

much breath, and no neophyte in singing is competent to manage a large body of breath. Bad attack is sure to result from any attempt to do so. The attack and much more must be acquired before singing in full volume should be attempted.

Taking in a large quantity of breath is at all times hazardous. The singer should inhale just as much breath as he needs for the tone he is about to produce, and there is no standard of mental judgment for this. The natural demand of the lungs is the best guide. You will find that they will protest equally against being starved and against being crammed. If they are stretched too much the muscular strain of retention will affect not only them, but also the throat, and you will without question get a tone sadly afflicted with vibrato.

Anything which tends to tie up the vocal cords, to rob them of perfect ease (that is, in so far as sensation goes) will bring on vibrato. On the other hand, if they are actually relaxed, that is, not properly set taut for the formation of a tone, the voice will surely wabble, and every tone will be unsteady and uncertain in pitch.

The breathing behind the attack, then, must be well within the power of the lungs. Practise deep, gentle and slow breathing, but in singing never attempt to fill the lungs to their utmost capacity. The athlete who can do a hundred yards in ten seconds flat and who is jogging along at a fourteen-second gait has the same feeling of ease and elasticity in his limbs as the singer should have in his chest when he is breathing properly.

Feeling this way he will not ruin his attack by tightening up the throat in

the effort to help the lungs hold in, nor by opening it up too much in the effort to help the air out. David Frangçon-Davies in his admirable work, "The Singing of the Future," says that we should draw just enough breath for a whisper and then convert it into tone.

A sigh of contentment is his standard of breathing. He advises the singer to draw a sigh of contentment, then to repeat that sigh and exhale it in tone. It is by no means bad advice. In practising attack, however, it would be well to think rather of the whisper than the sigh. A sigh is sometimes pretty deep. Think of a whisper, then, and inhale breath as if about to utter one. Then make your attack with that amount of breath.

Now follows the natural question, "What am I to attack?" Attack a vowel sound. That is the answer. In general

let consonants alone in the early stages of your practice, with one exception. The letter L is kind to the student of attack. It is recommended by most of the old masters as aiding in setting the mouth, lips, tongue, etc., in the natural position for the production of a good tone.

These same masters also advocate the use of the vowel sound best represented by the syllable "Ah" as the safest for the early stages of tone formation. They believed that in the utterance of this sound the throat was well opened and the tongue and palate brought into good positions.

This is true as far as it goes, but it is not the whole secret. The "ah" sound is the best open vowel sound, provided there be no artificiality in its utterance. Now if one puts much thought on the position of the tongue or the palate,

there will be artificiality, and the most probable result will be the placing too far back of the tone, which results in what is called throatiness.

In studying attack one should not fix his mind on the position of the tongue at all. What he should keep before him is the imperative necessity of having everything about his throat and mouth in a position creating a sensation of comfortable freedom, of elastic ease.

The runner runs with his legs and lets his arms swing relaxed. The singer sings with his breath and should let his throat and mouth feel relaxed. Of course the vocal cords are not relaxed, but there is no unnatural pull or haul on any of the muscles attached to the larynx. If one undertakes to force his tongue into some cramped position advocated by teachers as the best for tone production, he will speedily learn that

when he tries to sound certain vowels the tongue will fight for liberation to assume its function in the formation of that sound.

We make tone with our larynx, but vowels with that and the mouth combined. The lips and tongue have to do their share. Now when you sing "ah," it is perfectly easy to permit the tongue to lie flat in the mouth with its edge touching the teeth all around. That is what the old masters taught. But note this: You must simply let the tongue lie there. You must not force it. Sing "ah" once with your tongue perfectly relaxed. Just don't think about it at all. You will find that the tone comes out easily and without causing any sensation or discomfort in your throat.

Now sing it again, but this time gently push the tongue forward so as to make it press very lightly against the teeth.

In other words, feel for the teeth and make sure that the tongue is touching them. You will now discover a sensation of discomfort in your throat, a feeling as if the passage was partly stopped, and if you can hear your voice clearly you will note that your "ah" sound has altered perceptibly toward the short "a," as in "fan."

Continue to sing your "ah" sounds that way and you will end by having a flat, wooden and unvibrant tone, utterly unfavorable to artistic song. All your "ah" sounds will come out precisely as those of Ernst van Dyck did after his voice had lost all semblance of a musical organ, and for exactly the same reason.

Singing this sort of an "ah" is called singing "too open." The truth is precisely the opposite. It is singing too closed. The tongue being forcibly

pushed forward pulls up its own posterior part and crowds the throat passage so that the free emission of air is blocked. A strangulated, bleating quality of tone is the result. Therefore in practising attack with "ah" concentrate your mind entirely on the quality of the tone, and let your poor throat and tongue alone. Let them fall into a state of security and repose.

You may perhaps deceive yourself about this matter. Hence the need of an unprejudiced ear, that of the teacher. He must tell you when your tone sounds strained or muffled, and you must try to think it more free and open. Then draw in your breath as if for a whisper and sigh out the "ah" in placid contentment. The older masters, as we have noted, or at any rate many of them, believed in prefixing an "l" to the "ah" sound. There is much to be said in favor

of this practice. No other consonant so little impedes the flow of tone. No other gives so little interruption to it when sounded in the middle of a word.

On the other hand, the simple stroke of the tongue against the teeth made in forming this consonant brings the tongue down into a very good position for the proper emission of a round and sonorous "ah." The one thing to be borne in mind is that the student must in the end learn to sing his "ah" without the help of the "l," because it is on words beginning with open vowels that bad attack is most likely to occur.

If what has thus far been printed here in regard to the art of singing means anything at all, it means that it is not such a complicated and recondite process as it is generally represented to be. "Sing as you speak," says Jean de Reszke. This is not a scientific state-

ment of the case. The kind of tones employed in speaking are different from those used in singing, as has already been noted.

In speaking breath is taken without any thought just as often as it is necessary to replenish the store in the lungs. In singing it is essential to look ahead and perceive where breath can be conveniently taken without disturbing the outline of the melody which is sung. Again, in speaking we do not particularly concern ourselves about the quality of our tones, but permit them to issue from the throat in their spontaneous timbre.

In singing we aim to produce the most beautiful tones of which our throats are capable. But, on the other hand, the normal operations of the lungs and throat are the foundations of good singing. The dust thrown in the eyes of

students consists of a cloud of mystery constructed out of queer theories of artificial breathing and unnatural tone formation. Back to nature as closely as we can go should ever be the singer's ideal.

One of the writer's acquaintances has declared it to be his belief that there is no such thing as a natural method of singing, because singing is an artificial achievement. It is art. We were never intended by nature to sing, but simply to speak. In a measure this is true. Singing is art, while speaking is nature. But singing can be done by methods entirely opposed to nature, and also by other methods amicably related to her. These latter methods are all simple, the others are all complex.

The truth is that while speaking is nature, singing is nothing more than nature under high cultivation. The cul-

ture of wild flowers has in some instances given us beautiful additions to the garden. Speaking is like the wild rose; singing like the American Beauty. The student of singing should always keep this thought in mind, and when he finds himself confronted with some theory which makes the act of drawing and exhaling the breath or beginning the emission of a tone appear to be a complex process, depending on the voluntary guidance of a number of muscles and ligaments, he should examine it very closely and with suspicion.

The art of singing is an æsthetic art, not an anatomical study. It begins with an ideal dwelling in the realm of the conception of tonal beauty, not in the domain of correct movement of muscles. The problem of the great masters of the early period was to ascertain the best way of singing beautiful tones on

every vowel sound throughout the entire range of a voice, not to find how to operate certain parts of the body and decide that such operation ought to give the tone.

They reasoned from the tone to the operation, not from the operation to the tone. Too many modern theorists seem to proceed in the latter way, and that is why they build up complicated and unnatural processes which confuse students and do incalculable harm.

VI

ABOUT TONE FORMATION

ATTACK should be practised by all beginners in the medium range of their voices only. Indeed, no exercises in the extreme upper or lower parts of the singer's scale should ever be undertaken except by students sufficiently far advanced to be able to do so without strain.

By strain here is meant forcible pulls on the muscles of the throat. Perfect emission of tone presupposes complete freedom of these muscles. They should operate entirely normally, and if they do the singer will not feel their operation. If they do not operate normally there will be a perceptible pull somewhere. The only way to avoid contract-

ing muscular habits of this sort is for the student to take everything easily at first. Sing always a trifle below mezzo forte, but not altogether piano, for singing down to a complete piano is likely to result in flabbiness of the vocal cords.

The attack, then, should be practised at first on the syllables "la" and "ah" in the tones which come most easily to the singer in the middle of the voice and at a little less than half power. The next step forward is practice of attack on other simple vowel sounds. The student should use at first only long O, long E (English) and Oo. These are perfectly pure vowel sounds and can be utilized safely.

In the beginning it is wiser to let the others alone. Some of them are compound, and others are conducive to bad tone if sung by a person who has not yet

acquired any command of attack and tone formation. In the end, of course, every singer must learn to sing all vowel sounds on all notes of his scale.

It is true that some never acquire ability to do this. Sometimes this inability is caused by peculiar conformation of the mouth, and again it is the product of pure laziness in practice. The celebrated tenor Brignoli was so indolent in this matter that he found it most comfortable to sing all his upper middle tones on the vowel sound "ah," and all his high notes on the long Italian I. Hence he was wont at times to alter his text so that he sang simply "Ah, si," over and over. Such a performance would not be tolerated in these days of realistic opera.

While practising attack the young singer must acquire a knowledge of correct tone placing. He cannot go on

singing without any knowledge of this. Now, tone placing is a much-vexed question. Any one who observes carefully the art of the eminent singers of the Metropolitan Opera House will find many differences in their methods of placing. Those who do so observe will furthermore find some rather pointed warnings against the acquirement of bad habits.

Tone placing is a term which shares with more than two-thirds of the nomenclature of singing technics a sad lack of scientific accuracy. The terminology of the art is more than half figurative. Such expressions as "chest register," "head register," for examples, are figures of speech, not scientific appellations. So, too, tone placing is a figurative expression. Tone formation is a more accurate phrase, but it does not, considered simply as a piece of

English, mean precisely the same thing as tone placing.

When singing teachers talk about tone placing they have in their minds a clear idea, but it is one hard to put before a student. The whole matter rests largely upon the intellectual conception of tone, but it has also a distinct physical aspect. The question first to be considered is, how best to make use of the natural resonating parts of the body which are set in vibration by the sung tone and which reënforce and enrich it.

What makes your voice have a different quality from that of your friend? Both are originally made by those two little thin bands in the larynx called vocal cords. Let that fact never slip out of mind. Voice is made by vocal cords, but it is modified by other agents acting in union with those cords.

Helmholtz demonstrated that every

musical sound was complex. There is a fundamental tone and certain other sounds called upper partials or harmonics or overtones. These overtones are not perceived by the untrained ear, but they exist nevertheless. In the ringing of a large bell they become perfectly audible to the most casual observer, but in tones more closely knit they melt into the whole and pass unobserved.

Now let us imagine some abstract tone producer capable of emitting elementary pitch without quality. Let us suppose that we caused this tone producer to sound its note first through a cylindrical tube, next through a hollow ovoid, next through a conical tube and finally through an oblong box, like a thirty-two foot organ pipe. We should in each case get a different quality of tone, and for want of a better term we

should say that these tones had different timbres.

Some theoreticians are of the opinion that timbre is affected by the nature of the substance through which the tones are sounded, and that a human voice acquires part of its difference from a clarinet (for example) because it is formed in different material. This theory has of late been warmly opposed, and Mahillon Brothers, a firm of Belgian cornet makers, conducted a series of experiments to show that cornets, scientifically made of wood, brass, copper, iron or other materials, all sounded alike, provided only that the bores were identical in every particular.

The point to be made here, however, is that whether it is owing wholly to the shape of the cavity or partly to the substance of which it is made, the difference in timbres is caused by the promi-

nence of some upper partials and the retirement of others. The upper partials are all present in the resonating cavities above mentioned, but the cylinder will emphasize certain ones, while the conical tube will bring forward others, and thus we get a difference in timbres, whether the substance of which the tube is made be the same or not.

Now in the human being difference of tone is caused by differences in the shape of the parts of the person which vibrate in sympathy with vocal tone. Study of throats with the laryngoscope shows that the epiglottis (termination of the air passage above the glottis) differs in different individuals. That in itself would be enough to cause some variety in voices. The shape of the throat is not precisely the same in every human being, and that is another cause. Here we have a case in which it is

surely not the substance, but the shape in which it is moulded that causes the prominence of some upper partials and the obscurity of others in such a way as to make difference in voices.

This is not all. The vibrations of the vocal cords in producing sounds are carried down the larynx to the chest, and so the shape of the chest plays a part in coloring the voice. Again, because the air blast is propelled through the cords into the cavity of the throat, the throat is set in vibration, and these vibrations are carried up into the cavities of the nose.

Furthermore, there are cavities in the bones of the skull, in the forehead and just over the rear of the roof of the mouth. Anatomists have shown that these vary somewhat in shape and size in different persons. Now the vibratory waves caused by sound in the throat are

carried up and communicated to these cavities, and their formation thus influences the quality of one's tone.

It is owing not only to differences in the length and thickness of vocal cords but also to these other differences in shape and size, which affect the upper partials of a tone, that human voices have different timbres, that Melba sounds different from Sembrich or Caruso from Jean de Reszke. It is in the formation of the cords and the resonating cavities as they are called, that singers receive the gift of nature in the shape of a voice.

Timbre is also affected by the action of the palatal muscles called the tensores, which lower the soft part of the roof of the mouth and at the same time give it a certain amount of firmness. It is also affected by the levatores palati, which lift the soft palate. Acting

alone this lifting of the soft palate produces throaty tone. When the tensores and levatores work against one another so as to produce a perfect balance of power, the singing tone is rich and noble.

The question of tone placing, then, resolves itself into this: Is it possible by taking thought about the various resonators to bring out the best qualities of a singing voice? The experience of nearly three centuries of study and experiment by singers and teachers of singing has resulted in a consensus of opinion that it is. In spite of this there are still some who do not believe in any consideration of the resonating cavities, while others are foolish enough to think they can utilize some one of them at the expense of all the others.

Perhaps the clearest illustration of what is meant by this is to be found in

overemployment of the resonance of the nasal cavity. The person who has this habit purposely drives the greater part of the air which has come through his vocal cords upward into the passage leading from the rear of the mouth into the nostrils. The result is a nasal twang in every tone, or in common speech the singer sings through his nose.

Joseph Sheehan, the tenor of Mr. Savage's English opera company, went to Paris one summer and studied three months. About all that his teacher could manage to teach him in that time was that he should utilize the nasal resonators, which he had previously not used at all. The result was that when Mr. Sheehan came back to America and sang *Rhadames* in "Aïda" he was generally informed that he sang through his nose, whereupon he lamented bitterly that he had spent three months

and much honest coin in learning to do something wrong.

The French masters, however, are generally prone to overestimate the part played by nasal cavities in tone formation. These cavities must be used, but not disproportionately. The French tongue makes their use imperative, because no one can sing such words as "rien" or "bien" without using them.

The proper way to employ the nasal cavities is to let them entirely alone. In speaking one does not think about them and they attend to their business. In singing one should think of them only as much as is necessary to avoid closing them. They should be left open so that they may freely communicate with the rear arch of the mouth, and thus the resonating cavities not only of the nose but also of the head will without any thought on the part of the singer per-

form their natural offices and bring out the natural timbre of the tones.

The French say we should sing "dans le masque," by which they mean to convey the idea of projecting tone through the mouth and nose, but not through one at the sacrifice of the other.

But this is not all. The singer must use some art in focussing the tones in the mouth. This is one of the most important details of singing, because upon its proper execution depends largely the beauty of the tone. Furthermore a proper conception of the point at which one should aim to focus tone leads to a correct position of the organs employed in the formation and thus prevents the taking of unnatural positions certain in the long run to injure the voice.

For the beginner, then, practising en-

tirely in the medium register, the point upon which the tone should be focussed is the front of the hard palate, the roof of the mouth where it begins to curve downward toward the upper teeth. Remember that you cannot make a tone there. You make it with your vocal cords. Remember also that you cannot place it there. What you really do is to think it there. When you do that, you involuntarily put your mouth into the correct position.

In other words, each tone should sound as if it were made just behind the teeth. When tones are placed too far forward they sound as if they were between the teeth, because of the too great pull on the tensores palati, and this gives them a hard, metallic quality. When placed too far back there is undue strain on the levatores palati and the tones assume a throaty sound.

In the formation of tones the lips are not to be forgotten, as their position has not a little influence on vocal sounds. Only general rules can be laid down for this detail. The one fundamental law of good tone production, that there should be no holding or tightness, no forcing, but a feeling of comfortable relaxation, stands good here. The mouth must of course be opened. Some singers open it too much, others not enough. The old masters advocated opening it sufficiently to admit the forefinger. Many singers, however, will find that their tones flow most freely when the mouth is opened just a little more widely than this.

Some teachers and some singers believe that the secret of good tone lies in pushing forward the lips. The mouth is resolutely opened in the form of the letter O, the lips being compelled to

protrude somewhat. Sbriglia of Paris is the most ardent advocate of this style, and yet Jean de Reszke, who studied with him for a time, discarded it in the very beginning. Madame Nordica employs it and is a firm believer in it. Madame Sembrich, on the other hand, employs the horizontal oval, or letter O laid on its side. This lip formation, the old masters asserted, gives the tones a beautifully soft sonority, suitable for the expression of feeling.

If, however, this position be exaggerated, as in a forced smile, the inevitable result is "white voice." Now there are occasions when "white voice" may be employed for passing effects, but to fall into the habit of using it all the time is to make emotional expression absolutely impossible. A finished artist ought to be able to color tone at will, but for the student only

the best and most beautiful sonority must be sought. Therefore let him avoid all forced positions of the lips. On this point may be advantageously quoted some sensible words of Albert Bach, the London master:

"The teacher must from the outset ascertain with the greatest care the position of the mouth that is easiest and most suitable for each pupil and attend to its being constantly maintained. Even very small variations in the dimensions of the mouth strikingly alter the formation of the tone.

"The Bernacchi school of Bologna says opening the lips more or less by a tenth of an inch is of marked influence on the tone. With some singers whose organization permits only a moderate separation of the jaws in the production of the vowel E (eigh) a scarcely perceptible elevation of the

point of the tongue prevents the free passage of the tone on this vowel.

"Each face, mouth and tongue being formed differently, special trials have to be made with every beginner in order that it may be established in what way he can form the tone with the greatest ease and beauty."

The old masters were especially skilful in ascertaining the best way for each pupil to get the best results. This was largely owing to the fact that they were not mere theorists. They had a great store of experience and tradition to lean upon and they had ready solutions of most of the problems raised by individuality. They were not hidebound at all. Their method was flexible and adaptable in detail, but solid and immovable in fundamentals.

VII

REGISTERS OF THE VOICE

Giovanni Lamperti says: "There is no doubt that the greater part of the difficulties encountered at a change of register, as well as the uneven tones within one and the same register, may be traced to faulty breathing. At a change of register especially the breathing must be calm and easy. When it is so and the body is in a normal position, with the mouth and pharynx suitably opened, no one will experience difficulty at a change of register."

Here again speaks the voice of experience and culture in the fertile field of Italian tradition. Singing teachers who have feared that pupils might

regard the science of singing as too simple to justify the exorbitant prices asked for instruction in it are among the chief inculcators of perplexing ideas about the registers of the voice. We have been asked to believe that there are three different methods of producing tones, namely, the chest, the medium and the head. The truth is that all the tones of the voice are produced by the vibration of the vocal cords, and these cords are caused to vibrate by the passage through them of air from the lungs.

It is equally true that there are changes in the position of the larynx at different places in the scale of each singer, and that the sensations caused by these changes sometimes produce feelings of discomfort and lack of freedom in the act of singing. In striving to get rid of these feelings singers

often resort to some abnormal pull among the throat muscles and thus acquire a bad method of singing certain tones.

When they have acquired such a method there is a marked difference between the tones produced without the abnormal pull and those produced with it, and this difference is called inequality of registers. One of the problems, therefore, that confront the student of singing is how to equalize his registers, which is simply another way of saying how to sing throughout his scale without materially altering the character of his voice. The words of Giovanni Lamperti, quoted above, should suggest fruitful reflection to many who have been bamboozled by the pretentious nonsense put forward by so many professors of this art.

There is no question whatever that a

mechanical change in the production of tone does take place in the upper range of any voice, or in what is now called the head register. Giulio Caccini in his "Nuove Musiche," written at the beginning of the seventeenth century, when the study of artistic singing was just stepping from the portals of the church to the doors of the theatre, recognizes the two registers, which he designates as "voce piena" and "voce finta." Literally these terms mean "full voice" and "disguised voice." They correspond to what believers in two registers now call lower, or chest, and head registers.

The writers of the master songs of church counterpoint utilized the head tones of men in their works. We have the careful account of Cerone (1613) on this matter, and he recognized two registers—chest and head. Since, there-

fore, the head voice (so-called) has been known and systematically used since the earliest period of the art of singing, we may accept it as a demonstrated fact.

The name is not quite satisfactory; but few of the terms used in the practice of singing are. This expression, "head voice," simply means that the notes in its range seem to cause vibrations in the skull or some part of it, whereas the physical feeling of vibration in the medium register is in the pharynx and in the lowest tones in the upper part of the chest.

Here we are again confronted with an inexact terminology. Most masters of singing divide registers into three—chest, medium and head. Very few of them hold that there is any change of mechanical operation in the passage from the chest to the medium. They

are speaking merely of division of the scale. For practical purposes, it is convenient to use the three terms, but their true meaning must never be forgotten.

Sir Morell Mackenzie made many careful experiments and laryngoscopic investigations into this subject, and exhaustively reviewed the work of leading scientists and teachers. His conclusion, while it may not be that accepted by all the best contemporaneous masters of singing, is nevertheless worthy of serious attention. He found just the same number of registers as Caccini found three centuries ago—namely, a chest and a head.

In the chest register the pitch of the tones is raised, according to Mackenzie, by an increase of the tension of the vocal cords, and also by an almost microscopic addition to their length. In the head register, the pitch is raised

by a gradual shortening of the vibrating reed, which is not quite so tense as in the chest register.

In other words, when the pitch has been raised as far as possible by an increase of tension on the vocal cords, the mechanical process is altered, and additional notes can be obtained by a different method. In producing these additional notes the vocal cords relax a trifle and then substitute for vibrations involving their entire length vibrations of only a part of it.

The cords come together just as they do in the natural lower tones, and then a small aperture near one end opens and allows itself to be set in vibration by the air blast. This produces the head tones, and the problem of the singer is to learn how to pass from the lower register into this one without so great a change in the quality of

the voice as to cause a shock to the sensitive ear.

Mackenzie calls attention to the fact that all the scientific investigators of the voice have found only two registers. He names Müller, Mandl, Battaile, Vacher, Koch, Meyer, Gougenheim and Lermoyez. Teachers of singing, on the other hand, have almost always held that there are at least three registers, and some of them have discovered as many as five. These five cannot be anything more than arbitrary divisions of the scale. There are not four changes in the anatomical process of voice production. There is only one, and that is the one which takes place at the transition from the "voce piena" to the "voce finta."

The sensation of vibration in the chest caused by singing the lowest tones of the voice is easily explained.

When the lowest tones are sung the vocal cords have placed upon them the smallest amount of tension. They make slow and heavy vibrations just as the big pipes of an organ do, and these vibrations, being near the chest, communicate themselves to it, and the singer feels them. When the tones are pitched high the vibrations are short and rapid and are felt less in the chest than in their own immediate neighborhood.

In sounding the lowest tones of the voice the larynx sinks, and that brings the vocal cords nearer to the chest. This sinking of the larynx is caused by the natural relaxation of the muscles, so that the tension on the vocal cords may be reduced. When the singer emits a medium tone the increased tension draws the larynx up a little, but a very little.

The student of singing, however, need not concern himself at all with the physiological formation of chest and head tones. What he must do is to ascertain at what point his voice naturally passes from one to the other, and then learn how to make the passage easily, smoothly and imperceptibly. In the voices of women this passage appears to cause more trouble than it does in those of men. At least such is the testimony of some experienced and competent masters of the art.

Nothing better has been said on this subject than the words of Lamperti with which this article begins. Practice and keen listening are the two elements which must enter into this operation of equalizing the registers. The chief object to be kept in mind is making the transition without introducing any feeling of constriction in the throat. As

Meyer has well said, one sings with his body through his throat, but not with his throat. Of course he is referring entirely to the propulsion of power.

Careful and correct breathing will go a long way toward the solution of the troublesome problems of equalizing registers. Together with these must go that nice mental conception of tone without which the singer can never become an artist. The student must form a clear and settled idea of the quality of tone for which he is to seek throughout his voice. He must therefore formulate his ideal for his high tones on those of the medium register, which are the most easily and spontaneously formed.

It is for this reason that he must carry on all his early practice on his medium tones. They must be correctly produced before more difficult notes are undertaken. When the student can

sing with some ease and freedom up to the point at which he becomes conscious of a change in the mechanism it will be time for him to consider seriously the solution of the question of crossing the Rubicon. The point at which the change from the chest to the head register takes place is not the same in all voices.

The passage from the low to the medium register in women's voices is usually from E on the lowest line of the treble clef to F, and that from the medium to the high from E flat in the top space to F. The chest register of a tenor will usually run no higher than the E at the top of the middle octave. That of a barytone will go as high as E flat and that of a genuine bass up to D.

It must be borne in mind, however, that these are generalizations. No hard

and fast rules can be laid down in regard to a matter which presents considerable variety. One thing is quite certain, and that is the point of alteration can readily be decided by the ear of a teacher, if not by the sensations of the student.

The golden rule in the treatment of the registers is to keep them in a normal state. The lowest register below the clef is that in which the vocal cords are least tense, and therefore the tones can never be given great sonority in that region. Any attempt to do so will lead to squeezing with the muscles through the involuntary endeavor to steady the cords against the undue pressure of air. This will produce a harsh and disagreeable tone, and if the practice is continued it will work great injury to the voice.

It is still more dangerous to try to

carry up the chest (here including the medium) register beyond its limits. This, again, brings an unnatural strain upon the mechanism of the voice, and because the effort required to produce the high tones in this way is very great the damage to the voice is correspondingly large.

Lamperti recommends for practice in equalizing the registers the use of the four notes of the chords of C major and D flat major. He advises his pupil to sing the chord ascending in one breath with careful attention to legato, and then, after taking a breath, to sing it down again. This exercise introduces the low E and F, on which the passage from the low to the medium is likely to occur. A similar exercise is recommended, going up as far as G above the clef, for crossing the bridge between the medium and head registers.

Paul Marcel, a prominent Parisian teacher, whose book on singing is filled with common sense, advises the pupil to practise the passage from E flat to E and afterward from E flat to F without any stroke and carrying the voice lightly from one note to the other. "By this practice," he says, "the voice will be rendered homogeneous and the pupil will become able to use it without a feeling of fatigue and without making those Tyrolean sounds so injurious to the voice and so disagreeable to the ear."

One of the most excellent adjuncts to the mastery of the transition from the medium to the head register is the fact that the mechanism of head tones can be carried down a little below the limits of the head register. In other words, the tones at the transition point can be sung in the head register as well as in the chest. The last one or

two semi-tones of the chest register can be sung with the mechanism of the head register. This gives the singer the option of producing these tones in one of two ways, either to afford relief to the voice or to produce significant effects of tone color.

Albert Bach, the London teacher, advises his pupils to practise passing from one register to another by forming a short scale with the transition note in its middle. Then sing this scale up and down "gently and with little expense of breath." In going up the transition note is to be sung with the mechanism of the lower register and in coming down with that of the upper. The present writer has no direct knowledge of the value of this method of practice, but it is based on the principles underlying those recommended by other masters, and it sounds reasonable.

In dealing with this entire question of registers the singer must ever bear in mind that an important element in the solution of the problems is tone-placing. The singer is always afraid that the tones of his low register will not carry. That is why he so often resorts to pushing. If the tones are correctly formed they will carry. That is the sum of the whole matter.

Almost all the authors of treatises on singing, and, indeed, many singers with whom this writer has discussed the subject, lay down points of aim for the placing of head tones. These points are not the same as that used for the placing of chest tones. We are told that the place for chest tones is the front of the hard palate; that for head tones the soft palate.

The truth is that a deal of nonsense is talked and written on this subject.

Clara Kathleen Rogers in "The Philosophy of Singing" comes very close to the truth when she says that one must recognize the point of vibration in each register, but must not make any deliberate attempt to place the tone there.

Knowing full well what is likely to meet with the derision of some good teachers, the present writer does not hesitate to say that many singers play havoc with their upper tones by trying to do too much to assist the natural process of their formation.

Some forcibly open their mouths laterally by drawing back the corners of the lips, a method which invariably whitens the tone. Others violently throw up their chins and thus bring to bear a sudden pull on the top of the larynx, a pull which disturbs the poise of the vocal mechanism.

What the singer ought to do is to keep the muscles of his throat in a condition of ease and elasticity. He should not, in any circumstances, make efforts with his throat. He should open his mouth freely and naturally, simply by dropping the lower jaw, not by pulling at the lips. He should let his tongue lie comfortably in the lower part of his mouth, so that the whole back of the throat will be free to resonate and to permit the passage of the air.

Then, with the lungs sufficiently filled, he should propel the air with the diaphragm and rib muscles steadily and with just the necessary power (and no more) through the vocal cords. Let him *think* the tone—think its pitch, its quality and its pose. In thinking the latter let him aim to get the whole cavity of the mouth in resonance and to permit the nasal resonance chambers

to do their part. Sing the high tones firmly "dans le masque," as the French say.

That does not mean through the nose, but through the mouth and with a feeling of perfect freedom in the nasal passages. The student who follows all the hints given in this chapter will have no serious troubles with the break between registers.

VIII

MESSA DI VOCE AND PORTAMENTO

Giovanni Lamperti says that the messa di voce should not be attempted till the pupil has attained a considerable degree of agility. This idea is in direct opposition to those held on the same subject by many other excellent teachers. The messa di voce is the sounding of a sustained tone with a swell, that is, by beginning it piano, increasing it to full voice and then diminishing it again to piano. Why agility, which means the ability to sing runs and florid passages, should be acquired before the messa di voce is begun is a question which I find myself quite unable to answer.

The ability to sing a good messa di voce depends entirely on the control of the breath and the consequent steadiness and gradation of tone. Now, the control of breath is the first thing the student has to learn, and from his command of it he derives confidence in his power to sustain a steady tone and to emit it with a degree of force such as he chooses.

Therefore the next step ought logically to be toward the messa di voce, in which are combined the elements of tone mastery. Furthermore, it is by proceeding from the emission of tone sustained at a dead level to the sounding of tones varied in dynamic force that we throw off the shackles of monotony of style. It is by the emission of tones swelling and diminishing that we impart to song that wavelike undulation which gives it vitality and tonal vivacity.

Messa di voce was practised by the earliest singers. It is mentioned as far back as Caccini and is particularly described by Mazzochi, writing in 1638. These old masters, however, do not lay down rules as to whether it should be attempted before or after the acquirement of a certain amount of agility. It must not be forgotten that at the beginning of the seventeenth century, and indeed some time before that, singers were capable of executing ornamental music. Archilei, a soprano of the time, was much praised for her skill in adding ornaments to a melody.

Nevertheless an examination of the recitatives of the first operas and oratorios, the works of Peri, Caccini and Cavaliere will convince one that the stilo rappresentativo, as it was called, must have depended for its

expressiveness very largely on beauty of tone, pure legato style and the messa di voce, by which flexibility and eloquence are imparted to long passages of sustained tones.

Mancini said: "Un vero ed attimo artista se ne serve in qualunque nota di valore la messa di voce." A true artist avails himself of the messa di voce on every tone. This is going much too far, but it serves to show in what estimation this beautiful ornament of song was held at a time when the technics of singing were most thoroughly understood. Another later master, D'Aubigny, in commenting on the need of perfect breath control for the execution of this device says: "The beginning and the end of the note must resemble the wafting of the evening breeze: one perceives its beginning without being able to define it; one

is still listening to its termination when the note has already died away."

Two or three points must be kept in mind in singing messa di voce: In the first place the mouth must not be twisted or tortured; yet something has to be done with it. It must be kept nearly equally open throughout the tone. The tone must be carefully attacked and then gently brought forward, by which it will gain not a little in carrying power. In the beginning of the singer's study messa di voce should be practised entirely in the medium tones of the scale. No attempts at using it in the higher or lower notes should be made till the elementary exercises in the formation of these tones have been completed.

In singing messa di voce in the higher tones the mouth naturally needs to be opened a little more fully at the forte.

Otherwise the tones will sound compressed. On the contrary, as the tone is gradually diminished the mouth should be gradually permitted to diminish its opening so that the current of air forming the piano tone shall not be too much scattered and the tone thus lose its carrying power.

In spite of the dictum of Mancini, previously quoted, the old Italians seem to have had moderate notions about the employment of the messa di voce. Tosi says: "Una bella messa di voce in bocca di un professore che non sia avaro, e non se ne serva, che su le vocali aperti, no manca mai di fare un ottimo effetto." Which means: A beautiful messa di voce in the mouth of a professor who uses it with discretion and only on clear vowels will never fail to produce a fine effect.

Clara Kathleen Rogers says in regard

to the method of making a messa di voce: "Singers often think they are making a crescendo when, in fact, they are doing nothing of the kind. This is when they press on some of the throat muscles in their ignorance of how a crescendo is made, and associate the physical pressure with an increase of volume of sound.

"They do not really hear an increase of sound, but they take it for granted that there must be one in response to the pressure, which pressure, in point of fact, simply hardens the tone, or renders it tremulous—sometimes both. If we would acquire the skill to swell or decrease the volume of tone at will, we must understand and bear in mind that it is the breath, and the breath alone, that is physically responsible for the increase and decrease of tone, and not muscular pressure or procuring a larger

space in the throat for the tone to expand in by depressing the larynx."

In practising the messa di voce let the student begin precisely as in the first exercises of tone production. Let him sing the syllable "la" (the *a* sounded as in "father") on tones in the middle of his voice. Let the attack be piano, delicate, but perfectly bell-like in its clearness. Let the inhalation of breath previous to the attack be moderate, so that the respiratory apparatus may be under complete control without any sense of tightness.

Then breathe out the tone gently and steadily, increasing the force of the air blast gradually so that in the middle of the tone a moderate forte is reached, or a natural full tone. Then diminish the power of the air blast gradually till the tone dies away imperceptibly. Great care will be necessary in the diminuendo

to avoid allowing some of the air to escape without turning into tone. This will produce a faint hissing sound and impurity of tone.

It is also very likely to render the final part of the tone unsteady. This part of the tone, then, must be watched. Listen to a fine trumpeter play the opening notes of Wagner's "Rienzi" overture, and you will get a good conception of the messa di voce, except that the trumpeter will produce a forte of much greater power than a singer should desire to get.

The early Italian singers were in the habit of using very often, in company with the messa di voce, the portamento. Later singers used the portamento by itself, and it came to be one of the most admired features of artistic singing. It is used not a little in our time, but it is greatly abused.

Portamento means the sliding of the voice through the infinitesimal gradations of tone lying between a note and the ensuing one. This languorous progress of the voice is capable of much expression when judiciously employed, but when it becomes a habit it is deplorable, because then it leads to scooping.

It ruins correct attack and is actively hostile to accurate intonation. Once let a singer fall into the scooping habit and he will never more attack the tone which he intends to sing. He will strike into the scale somewhere below the tone and then slide up to it like a bad 'cello player feeling along the fingerboard for the position.

The secret of a pure and elegant execution of the portamento lies in the preservation of the pose of the first tone. The singer must aim to avoid a

mental conception which will lead him to anticipate the second tone. He must pose his voice for the initial note, and think that pose all the time while his voice is gliding through the intervals between it and the second note. The emphasis in the mind must lie on the first note. Otherwise a scoop and not a portamento will be the result.

No special form of exercises is required for the acquirement of a good portamento. It will develop naturally if the student keep his mind upon it when he finds it advantageous for the production of a good effect. The main thing to be borne in mind is that it is a device to be used sparingly. It cannot be introduced artistically very often. When it is really needed it makes for beauty, but it should never be introduced merely for its own sake.

Those who heard the famous singers

of the eighteenth century were unanimous in their praise of the manner in which these artists used the messa di voce and the portamento. We read that such great singers as Farinelli, Caffarelli, Faustina and Cuzzoni produced the most beautiful effects by means of these two devices of song. But it is indisputable that their messa di voce was employed much more liberally than their portamento.

They knew well how to contrast with the portamento the clean glide from one tone to another, without touching the intervening tones, called by the Italians "di slancio." The student in practising portamento should frequently introduce this contrast in order that he may not lose hold of the perfect purity of his legato. An over-use of portamento is ruinous to a clean legato.

On the other hand the liberal employ-

ment of the messa di voce will impart to the voice a beautiful flexibility. Let it be understood that flexibility refers solely to the dynamics of tone, while agility is the term signifying the power to produce tones in rapid succession. A singer who is entirely without agility can possess a perfect command of the messa di voce and by means of it and other devices of expression give eloquence to every air.

The acquirement of the technics of the messa di voce and the portamento is one thing, while judgment in the use of these graces of song is quite another. It is unfortunate, but it is true, that few of the famous singers of the operatic stage are good models in this respect. There is a vast amount of positive vulgarity of style in the singing designed to captivate the ostentatious part of humanity called Society, or the equally

unrefined part which stands behind the orchestra rail and shouts "bravo" at every high tone.

The student should not be deceived by these things. He should aim always to be an artist, and the true artist combines continence in the use of his powers with refinement, taste and elegance.

IX

THE ACQUIREMENT OF AGILITY

It is quite true that this is not the day of the colorature singer. The modern lyric drama makes little use of the feats of agility with which the singers of a century ago astonished their auditors. The German lied, the reigning element in the song recital, narrows the sphere of vocal agility still more. Only in the oratorio does the singer of the present seem to be in imperative need of ability to execute cleverly what the earliest masters called "diminutions." Handel is inexorable in his demands, and Handel is apparently immortal, as he well deserves to be.

Nevertheless agility is essential to every

singer. The singer who has a command of florid style possesses a reserve store of technic which will always be of incalculable value to him. The vocal music of to-day is not embroidered with runs, trills, groups and other ornaments, as the operas of the late seventeenth century were, but it does contain thousands of progressions which can be executed with perfect smoothness and fluency by the agile voice, but by the singer untrained in colorature only awkwardly and uncertainly.

Even in the Wagner drama, that last extremity of dramatic style, there are many phrases calling for the ease and fluency of the colorature singer. What heavy-voiced soprano can carol the music of the *Forest Bird* in "Siegfried"? How do all the impersonators of *Brünnhilde* stumble over the first clarion peal of the "Hojotoho" unless their voices

have been trained to the execution of trills and leaps. Even the mordent, which Wagner made a characteristic feature of his melody, cannot be sung cleanly by a singer who has no agility.

It is true that the modern singer need not be able to sing such passages as Faustina and Cuzzoni sang with amazing brilliancy, nor need she rival Jenny Lind or Patti. There is a wide field for the artist who elects to leave "Semiramide" and "Lucia" and their kind out of her calculations. But how much more elegant and gracious will be her delivery of a pure cantilena if she can sing the fiorituri of the florid rôles. What gave Lilli Lehmann her vast husbandry of resource but the fact that she was never in her greatest rôles taxing her technical resources? When she was singing *Isolde*, she had *Violetta* and *Norma* in reserve. They provided her

with a fluent technic which made her "O sink' hernieder" touching in the sinuous curves of its delicious cantilena.

Observe the perfect command of every interval and every progression displayed in Madame Sembrich's song recitals. She is standing always on the firm foundation of a facility of execution far beyond anything demanded in the field of song literature. She is always within herself. She is never, as racing people say, extended.

It is impossible to overestimate the value of agility of voice. Hence every singer should strive to acquire a fluent colorature. There is only one way to get it, and that is by practice. The pianist acquires rapidity of finger by beginning with simple five finger exercises and advancing as fast as he conquers one form of agility to the next one. The

singer has to do the same thing. There is no royal road to agility. Teachers who profess to know tricks by which a perfect trill or a flawless scale can be acquired in three lessons or four are charlatans, and they know they are.

There is an old story about Porpora and his famous pupil, Caffarelli, one of the wonderful male sopranists of the early eighteenth century. It is said that Porpora wrote on a single sheet of music paper all the feats that could be performed by the voice and set Caffarelli to work at them. After two years the discouraged student began to complain that he made no progress. Porpora reminded the youth that he had promised to do precisely as his teacher bade him. Caffarelli went back to his sheet of paper. To make the story short, Porpora is said to have kept him at it for six years, and then dismissed him

with the words, "Go, my son, you are the greatest singer in the world."

In those days to be a great singer meant to have perfect breath control, absolute accuracy of intonation, full command of a sustained and beautiful cantilena, a perfect messa di voce and portamento, and ability to execute the most appalling difficulties in ornament. It has been well said that in technic the singers of to-day are tyros compared with those of the Caffarelli period. The passages which they sang with dazzling brilliancy would stagger almost any of our colorature artists.

It is not desirable, therefore, that the singer of our time should set out to acquire an agility which would enable him to rival the vocalists of Handel's operas. Yet he certainly ought to learn how to sing the music of those works, for that is the most admirable of all colorature

song. It is the most musical, the most vocal and the most artistic. It unites genius in composition with a perfect knowledge of writing for the voice. One who can sing Handel fluently and expressively need have no fear of any technical difficulties in the music heard on the operatic stage to-day.

It is unnecessary, however, to confine one's self to Handel. There were fairly good masters before and after his time. Mozart, for example, provides opportunities for the study of florid music, and whatever he wrote commands the attention of the singer. Mozart was a greater inventor of melody than even Handel, and he knew well how to write for the voice. The grand airs of "Don Giovanni" are living evidence of his mastership. Turning to the German school, one finds the writers of the big dramatic bravura airs, such as "Abs-

cheulicher" and "Ocean, Thou Mighty Monster." These airs demand splendor of tone, great power and volume, as well as agility. They should never be undertaken by singers who have not first learned how to sing Handel and Mozart.

Rossini, Donizetti and even Bellini provide good examples of the colorature style of the early nineteenth century, a style well adapted to the voice, but far less admirable in its musical qualities than the styles of Handel and Mozart. The singer should not neglect any of these masters. However, before the student can study the arias of the famous composers he must acquire the elements of agility.

Colorature singing is best learned from some one who has mastered it. Hints may be given in print, to be sure, just as they may in regard to almost

anything else, but, after all, the teacher is the true guide to the acquirement of the ability to sing florid music. It may be said here, however, that the foundation of agility in vocal music is the same as that in instrumental performance, namely, the scale.

Short passages, constructed of successive notes of the scale, form the best elementary exercises. These passages should rest firmly on some one tone as a root from which the others are to be derived. In singing an ascending exercise, for example, the student should get firmly fixed in his mind the pitch of the tonic of the scale, which should form the starting point of the exercise.

Then if the passage to be used comprises five tones, ending with the dominant, he should get the pitch of the dominant thoroughly established in his mind. He might sing the interval several

times from tonic to dominant to get the relative pitch firmly established, for it is vital to clean colorature execution that the intonation be accurate. If the intonation be imperfect, the colorature will always be slovenly, and wholly without brilliancy.

When the student has his ear perfectly attuned to the interval of the fifth from tonic up to dominant, he should sing the scale ascending through those five tones. Practice of this sort should never be rapid or loud. The passage should be sung piano and with a light touch, care being taken that each tone is clearly brought out and neither smeared over into the next nor separated from it by a noticeable stroke of the glottis.

After the student can sing this ascending passage with comparative fluency, he should sing the same notes in inverse

order, descending. After he can execute both passages cleanly, he may essay an octave. In singing octave scales it is essential that the pupil should get the tonic, the dominant and the leading tone very firmly defined in his mental ear.

Lamperti gives an exercise in which the scale is sung very slowly with long holds on these tones. After singing the scale this way Lamperti's pupil is advised to sing it with comparative rapidity, lightly and cleanly. At the termination of the scale the student should sing an arpeggio of the four tones of the chord descending. This will hold him to the intervals of the chord. In practising the scale of an octave descending the student should begin with the lower tonic and take the interval of an octave upward and then sing down the scale to the lower tonic again.

Lablache, Manuel Garcia, Panseron, Winter, Martini, Garaude, Manstein, Fétis and others recommend a systematic progress from vocalises* on two notes up to the octave. Garcia says: "Those who wish to sing scales or other passages without having begun on two, three or four notes risk failing to execute roulades." He holds that it is easier to sing a passage of two notes than one of three, and one of three than one of four, and that, therefore, the correct progress begins with two.

The exercise which he gives for two notes is simple. The student is required to sing, say, C and D below the clef in alternation, the first time in quarter notes, four to the measure, then in eighth notes and finally in sixteenth notes.

* "Vocalises" is a convenient term used by singing teachers for vocal exercises. It is derived from the Italian singers' technical word "vocalizzi."

The exercise for three notes consists of the progression C, D, E, D, in quarter notes, then in eighth notes and then in sixteenth notes. Any teacher following out this idea can construct a series of progressive exercises for his pupils. These exercises are recommended by Lemaire and Lavoix as "an excellent gymnastic by which the voice will be rendered supple and agile." The "ah" sound is the most favorable for the majority of voices, though teachers will doubtless find cases in which some other vowel sound will better bring out the best qualities of tone in running passages and perhaps correct some faulty pose of the organs.

Lilli Lehmann believes in the practice of what she calls the "great scale" previous to all exercises in agility. The great scale is nothing more than the diatonic major scale divided into groups

of long notes with pauses for breath. Doubtless an exercise of this sort would aid in warming up the voice and fixing the intonation.

After sufficient facility has been acquired in the execution of scale passages in fluent style, the pupil will need to take up the delivery of staccato passages. These are best suited to the high tones of the soprano voice, because of the delicate and neat execution which they demand. Detached or staccato tones are executed by attacking each with a stroke of the glottis and quitting it immediately after the attack.

Lemaire and Lavoix say: "These sounds, of very short duration, should be articulated with dryness and without length, with a moderate opening of the mouth, and perfectly detached from one another. The inspiration is cut short after each tone and is sus-

pended; it is not correct to breathe, for a series of detached notes should be executed always with the same breath."

Chromatic scales offer difficulties of no small kind to the teacher and the student. On the method of approaching them most of the old masters are agreed. They found from their extensive experience in instructing that it was necessary to fix firmly in the minds of their pupils the intonation of chromatic intervals before they permitted students to attack the chromatic scale.

They therefore devised a series of exercises constructed on the same principle as Garcia's series of two, three, four and more tones in the diatonic scale. For example, one exercise begins with C, D, C in the first measure, while the second consists of C, C sharp, D. These two measures were written in quarter notes and were intended to be

sung slowly and carefully in order that the student should get the difference between the whole interval and the half interval clearly impressed on his mental ear.

Having sung C, C sharp, D correctly, the pupil next sings D, D flat, C. Finally he exercises on the ascending and descending series. This exercise, it will be noticed, covers the interval of a second. Next the pupil is permitted to exercise on the interval of a major third, always singing the interval itself before attacking the chromatic steps of which it is composed.

By a series of progressive exercises of this kind the student is carried forward till he sings a chromatic scale of an octave. Then comes the practice of increasing rapidity, beginning again with the interval of a second. This is the method of the French Conservatoire,

which adapted it from the works of Garcia, Concone, Martini and others.

It is, or ought to be, clear to the reader that Garcia's exercise on two notes is the best possible preparation for the trill. The only way to learn how to trill is to practise singing the two tones of which a trill is made till one can sing them sufficiently rapidly.

The exercise must be proportioned to the pupil's respiration. It should be in short passages at the beginning. The student should let the breath pour itself out gently with perfect equality and without effort of either the chest or the larynx.

Tosi, Mancini and Hiller recommend beginning the study of the trill in the earliest lessons, working at it every day, but always a little at a time, without trying to make it too long and always stopping the exercise as soon as the effort makes itself felt in the larynx.

Other masters advocate postponing the study of the trill till the voice is fairly well placed. It must be borne in mind that in the days of such masters as Tosi and Mancini agility was a prime requisite in singing. To-day the study of colorature is rather a means than an end. Some of the masters of to-day do not insist on the practice of colorature. Giovanni Lamperti says, Where the pupil "has no natural gift do not waste time on colorature study." Again, he says of the trill: "Not every voice is suited for this embellishment; heavy voices may even be injured by purposeless trill practice." The present writer believes that trill study should begin when colorature is taken up, after tone control has made considerable progress.

Agility should be acquired by every singer. Some will naturally acquire it in

a greater degree than others, but all can acquire it to some extent, and it is the foundation of ease and grace and fluency of delivery. It is an essential part of the beautiful old art of bel canto, upon which to-day singing must make its foundation.

X

TREATMENT OF THE VOWEL

As every one well knows, songs without words are written only for instruments. Voices are required to sing music accompanied by text. Hence, we are now confronted with the problems of enunciation. Singers often find difficulty in producing a good quality of tone on certain vowels in certain parts of their scale. Again, they find some consonants obstructive to that smooth flow of tone which is essential to a beautiful legato style.

It is unquestionable that these obstacles have faced singers from the beginning of the study of the technics of their art. In spite of their recognition of these difficulties, the masters of

music and vocal art have never ceased to demand of singers clean, correct and intelligible enunciation. Giulio Caccini in the preface to his "Nuove Musiche" (1601) declares that his experiments in writing vocal solos, then a new form of composition, were the result of his dissatisfaction with the contrapuntal masterpieces of the Church because they made the text unintelligible.

A little more than a century later we find Tosi writing thus: "Without a good pronunciation the singer robs the auditors of a great part of the charm which song receives from the words and excludes force and truth. If the words are not distinctly uttered one can find no difference between the human voice and the sound of a cornet or an oboe. Singers should not ignore the fact that it is the words which elevate them above instrumentalists."

France, which developed out of the pompous recitative of Lully her elegant and theatric declamation, has from Rameau's day to the present stood as a leader in the study of diction. Therefore we are not astonished to read the words of Gounod:

"There are two principal things to observe in pronunciation. It must be clear, neat, distinct, exact, that is to say, not permitting any uncertainty of the pronounced word to the ear. It must be expressive, that is to say, it must picture to the mind the sentiment expressed by the word itself. As to all that concerns clarity, neatness, exaction, pronunciation takes rather the title of articulation. Articulation has for its object to reproduce faithfully the exterior form of the word. All the rest is the business of pronunciation. It is this which imparts to the word the thought,

the sentiment, the passion, in which it is enveloped. In a word, articulation has for its domain form or the intellectual element. Articulation gives neatness, pronunciation creates eloquence."

It is plain that Gounod by "pronunciation" meant vowel sounds, and that he had a clear conception of the value of pure and beautiful vocal color in their delivery. The difficulties which many singers have found in pronouncing correctly some vowels in the upper ranges of their scales have given rise to numberless theories as to the true method of securing a beautiful tone color.

All the systems have one ultimate object, namely, to enable singers to produce sounds which shall convey at least a hint of the real vowel to the auditor and at the same time be beautiful. Almost every teacher clings to the long established theory that it is not possible

to sing certain vowel sounds honestly throughout one's compass and that therefore the trick technically termed "vocalization" must be learned.

If you cannot easily sing "ee" on a high note, you must learn how to pretend that you are singing it so as to deceive the ears of your hearers. If you cannot honestly sing "oo" at or about the place where your chest register meets your head register, you must acquire a method of simulating that vowel sound in that neighborhood.

Now, as long as the singer does this he will never get further than a poor imitation of the tone coloring which he seeks, however honestly and industriously, to obtain. The first students of artistic singing made no mistakes in these matters. In Zarlino's "Institutione Harmoniche" (1562) we find it commanded that the singer should

make his voice conform to the sense of the text, that he should sing gayly those things gay and joyous, and gravely all serious words; that he should distinguish between sacred and secular styles, and finally that he should not change the sounds of the vowels, transforming "ah" into "o" or an "ee" into "a." How different this from the sort of mysterious instructions one reads in some of the contemporaneous treatises on the art of singing.

"It is important that the singer should understand that a certain modification of the vowel is indispensable to the perfect production of sound in certain parts of the voice. For instance, the vowel 'ee,' as pronounced in 'deep,' is favorable to the upper middle tones, but when it occurs in the lower middle register it should be modified to 'i' in 'dip,' and in the chest or thick register

it should be still further modified to 'ü' as in the German 'grüss.'"

This passage appears in a work which is notable for its good sense in regard to most of the principles of singing. Lilli Lehmann, taking another view, advocates a continual mingling of vowel sounds. She holds that if the "ah" sound be used in perfect purity it produces a bright vocal color without depth, while if it be slightly modified toward "u" it results in a mellow, round and touching quality. But this is only another way of saying that the "ah" sound should be properly placed well forward where it is rich and solid, and not too far back where it becomes white and shallow.

That this is what Madame Lehmann had before her is still further shown by her advice to singers to keep the "u" sound always in mind, thus holding the

vocal organs in position to give all the vowel sounds throughout the voice with equability. Let the reader say "u" and observe where the sound of that vowel naturally locates itself. He will perceive that a forward tone is what Madame Lehmann was seeking, though she took a roundabout way to convey her idea.

But there is something more in this department of singing than correct placing of the tone. In a large percentage of the cases in which singers find difficulty in singing some vowel sounds in certain parts of their voices the fault is partly in imperfect pronunciation of the vowels.

This is a difficulty which prevails especially among American singers. Most concert goers have observed with wonder the ease with which English tenors, Mr. Lloyd, Mr. Davies and others, sing English text and rise to their upper G and even A and B flat. Most Americans,

on the other hand, are generally obliged to abandon all pretence of giving the vowels their real sounds above the clef.

There can be no doubt that the round and mellow English speech is the secret of the English singer's easy treatment of his vowels in song. The Englishman of culture uses a good free tone in ordinary speech, and softens almost every vowel sound. Thus, when he comes to sing, his vowels lie well in his mouth.

All his life he has formed them in his mouth. He has never tried to force them back into the throat and violently to drag the palate or some other unconcerned organ into their formation.

Hence his vowels help him to a forward tone; they do not fight against it. In his every "o" and "i" and "e," for example, there is just a touch of Madame Lehmann's darkening "u," which

softens the sounds, makes the tongue pliable in forming them, and preserves the singing form of the resonant hollow of the mouth.

What about the Americans? Only a very, very few of us speak English as the English do. We have our own "accent," as it is called. We are a nervous, eager, strident people. We know it, though we do not relish having foreigners tell us about it. We speak not mellowly, not with lax tongues and palates, but sharply, shrilly, with hardened mouth and with tones forced back upon the palate.

Our "ah" is almost an "a" as in "at." Our "a" as in "at" is a bleat. Our "ee" is as hard as hate and is squeezed out over tongues jammed resolutely against upper teeth. Our "i" is begun in the middle of the throat and ended almost at the lips. We strangulate two-

thirds of our vowels and swallow half the other third.

Pure, round, sonorous tones are almost never heard in our daily speech. We hear much of the ease of singing in Italian because of the purity of the Italian vowel sounds; but suppose the Italians pronounced their vowel sounds as we pronounce most of ours, would it be easy to sing in Italian then? No, we must first learn the correct sounds of our vowels. We must cultivate beauty of tone in daily speech. We must learn that every vowel sound in the English tongue can be formed without interrupting the flow of a beautiful speaking tone.

When we have learned that, we shall be ready to perceive that it is quite possible to sing all the pure vowels without modification throughout the range of the voice. The whole bag of

"vocalization" tricks can be thrown overboard. They are but a cumbrous method of begging the question. The question is not how can we modify so as to deceive the public ear those vowel sounds which we have already modified incorrectly in our daily speech, but how can we reform our pronunciation of the vowels so that they will be the roots of beautiful tones?

Here the reader will ask, "Did not many of the best masters of singing teach the modification of vowel sounds? Were not many of these masters Italians?" The answer is simple. It is true that many Italian masters have taught the tricks of vocalization, but the greatest masters have generally agreed that the text can be and ought to be sung correctly. Giovanni Lamperti says:

"The vowels 'i' ('ee') and French 'u' ('ü') are hard to sing on the high

notes. We shall take no singer to task for changing the position of such words or for substituting others with more euphonious vowels—provided he possess the technical ability to vocalize the above-named vowels on the high tones. The pronunciation of the vowels having been sufficiently practised in the solfeggi and vocalizes, we need dwell no longer on their quantity (long or short), for a pure pronunciation, free from dialect and sharply articulated, is a prerequisite."

In other words, Lamperti points out the most difficult vowel sounds, and says he would forgive any singer for dodging them, but not for being unable to sing them. This is a fair presentation of the view held by the best masters. But transposition of words or substitution is not always practicable, and therefore Lamperti's belief that every

singer should be able to deliver the difficult vowel sound on his high tones is a good one.

Wagner, who was by no means a mere theorist, held that the dramatic vitality of operatic declamation was largely founded on the life-giving quality which the color of the vowel sounds imparted to the singing tones. This is the theory which some of the most advanced students of vocal technics have taken up. It is not the office of vocal tone to color the vowel, but of the vowel sound to color the tone. The question is not how will you alter your vowels to suit your tone, but how will your pronunciation of vowel sounds enrich and liberate your tones?

Practice, continual practice, backed by careful observation and patience, is the only royal road to pronunciation of the text in song. No hard and fast rules

can be laid down. If the pupil has acquired a sure and trustworthy command of respiration, if he has learned the art of free and natural tone formation, all that he need do is to bear ever in mind that he must not sing his vowel sounds in such a way as to cause him to abandon his method of tone production.

He must seek for union of the perfect tone and the perfect vowel sound. The one will aid the other. When they are in conflict, which is rarely the case, they must be reconciled. They never are in conflict except in the high tones, and here every singer must find his own solution of the problems.

Perhaps it may be well for the student to bear in mind that in singing compound sounds, such as the diphthongs "ai" or "au," he should take advantage of the fact that the first half of the

combination is "ah," and form his tone by dwelling on that and giving the second sound very little duration. So in singing the vowel sound represented by the long English "a," which has a touch of "ee" at its end, the second sound must be brief.

Such solutions of the simpler difficulties will occur to every singer of intelligence. It will require more thought to find the best way of singing the modified vowels of French and German. Such a word, for instance, as "*perdu*" brings its own troubles to many a singer. Let him avoid the common French vice of forming the u right between the lips and thus turning tone into husky noise. The sound can be formed further back, retaining the normal position of the tongue and mouth, and thus allowing the tone to have a true vocal quality.

M. Plançon, for instance, sings the

modified vowels of his native language without abandoning that noble sonority of tone which is one of the most admirable characteristics of his art.

David Frangçon-Davies, whose thoughtful and sensible book, entitled "The Singing of the Future," has already been often quoted in these pages, says that "right breathing can only be judged by right tone," and that "right tone can only be judged by the *summum bonum* of the singer, viz., pronunciation—pure, truthful pronunciation, in every part of the voice, high or low. The word with its atmosphere is the test. Pronounce with refinement, with the quick wit of rational and imaginative beings, and your tone will be right. Breathe so that you pronounce rightly and you breathe rightly." And he adds a footnote to caution the reader that by pure and truthful pronunciation

he means something radically different from vocalized pronunciation.

The present writer is a relentless antagonist of the vocalization apparatus. He may not go as far as Frangçon-Davies in believing that right breathing induces correct pronunciation, but he is satisfied that the one aids the other, and that incorrect pronunciation of elementary vowel sounds has created the need for many of the tricks of vocalization, simply because the impure pronunciations twist the mouth and throat into positions inimical to the flow of free and beautiful tone.

The secret of treating the vowel sounds is this: pronounce beautifully and you will be able to sing the sounds without difficulty, except in one or two cases. These difficult sounds can be produced by keeping the throat and mouth free and easy. Think always of purity of

tone, freedom of emission and control of breath. Do not think of how you can pull your mouth about so as to alter the sound a little and thus make it easier.

That will not make it easier, and it will surely render it ugly. Face the difficult sound honestly and sing it honestly, supporting it with a calm, steady air column and a reposeful position of the mouth and throat. You will in the end learn to sing it correctly and with a good tone, instead of incorrectly and with a poor tone.

The words of Gounod quoted in the early part of this article now take a deeper significance. The composer of "Faust" stood on the same ground as the composer of "Tristan und Isolde." "Pronunciation creates eloquence," said Gounod, and he echoed Wagner. Both agreed that much of the express-

iveness of song lay in the color of the vowel sounds. Both had the demands of the poetic drama in view. Singers will do well to bear this in mind.

XI

TREATMENT OF THE CONSONANTS

In his "Musical Education and Vocal Culture," Albert Bach, the English teacher, says: "In Sanscrit the consonants are called vyongana—*i.e.*, plain revelation. The vowels are called svara —*i.e.*, sounds; and there is a proverb—'Be sparing with the vowels, says the tongue, and you will speak beautifully; honor the consonants and you will speak distinctly.' The consonants must always be uttered with exactness, but quickly, so that the continuity of the flowing tone may suffer as little interruption as possible. The attention paid to distinctness of pronunciation must

never be carried so far as to prejudice the note sung."

The fault in this otherwise excellent advice is that it goes too far, and thereby betrays the author's want of insight into the true principles of pronunciation as related to singing. It is true that the consonants should be uttered exactly and also quickly, but it is not true that distinctness need ever work injury to the note sung. The problem which confronts the singer in dealing with consonants is how to enunciate distinctly and still preserve a flowing style of song. It is easy enough to acquire the declamatory manner in which the consonants are purposely allowed to interrupt the steady flow of tone, but to preserve the legato and still make every word clean-cut is what staggers most singers.

The secret of the whole thing lies first in the perfect purity of the vowel sounds

and second in a free and untrammelled articulation. By keeping the vowel sounds pure and round the pose of the vocal organs in the formation of tone is preserved. When this pose is disturbed by bad vowel pronunciation, as it often is, the movements of the tongue and lips in forming consonants are exaggerated and thus the consonants become greater obstacles to singing than they naturally should be.

By free and untrammelled enunciation of the consonants is meant the articulation of them with no more movement of the enunciating organs than is absolutely essential. Most singers harden the muscles of the tongue and contort their lips in enunciating consonants in such a way that a steady flow of tone is quite out of the question. Furthermore, they do this while they are striving to acquire clearness.

It is the striving which does the damage. Singers should practise speaking in clear, round tones with clean-cut enunciation of the consonants and learn that it is possible to carry on a conversation thus without twisting the mouth into all sorts of shapes and pulling the tongue about so that the larynx cannot remain in a state of rest.

It is just as easy to enunciate in singing as in speaking. The purpose of every singer should be to carry from speaking into singing a simple, natural, free manner of enunciation. The action of the enunciating apparatus should be without effort. It should feel restful. The principle of perfect freedom from stiffness or restraint should prevail here as it does in tone production.

A few intelligent observations will enable any student to solve all problems of consonantal enunciation in singing.

The question almost invariably asked is whether an attempt must be made to join the consonant to the vocal tone or not. Now, whether this is or is not to be done, nothing is to be gained by dwelling on the consonant. It should be enunciated clearly, but quickly, unless the singer desires, for some particular dramatic effect, to give it extraordinary prominence.

Some of the consonants have a certain quantity of vocal sound. These are l, m, n, r, w and y. The combination ng at the end of a word is also in this class. The letters r, w and y have a partial vocal sound which does not interfere with the flow of air through the mouth. The letters, l, m, n are likely to impart a nasal color to a tone if they are prolonged, because they force too much of the air blast into the nasal passage. This is especially the case with m.

Hence these consonants should be enunciated quickly.

When any one of these consonants occurs in the middle of a word it does not stop the flow of tone at all, but slightly alters its color. The singer should be careful in singing such words to give the requisite quantity to a note by prolonging the vowel, not the consonantal sound. He should, for example, sing not "ham—m—m—mer," but "ha—a—a—mmer."

The consonants with which most singers have trouble are those which tempt us to guttural vocal sounds. These are b, p, d, t, g, j and ch. The trouble is that so many of us in our ordinary speech precede these consonants with a half formed vocal sound. We say as nearly as it can be expressed in type, "ub-bread," "up-poison," "ug-go," "uj-joy" instead of clean

and simple "bread," "poison," "go," "joy."

Now, in singing we must wholly avoid these preliminary rumbles. We must cut out our b, t, p, etc., clearly and distinctly as consonants. Thus when we have to give them at the beginnings of words we shall not disturb the poise of the tone forming apparatus before the word itself is reached, but after the enunciation of the initial consonant we shall find the tone producers in free and comfortable position to perform their functions.

When one of these consonants occurs at the end of a word the singer need not concern himself as to whether there is a faint vocal tone imparted to it or not. His diction will certainly be more elegant if it is not, but if it should be, his enunciation will not thereby be made indistinct.

A fault not uncommon among public speakers should be avoided. In their anxiety to bring final consonants of this class out clearly speakers frequently add a syllable, transforming "head" into "head-uh" or "rob" into "rob-uh." Singers need hardly be told that such a practice is subversive of correctness in diction.

The labial and dental consonants are often badly treated, in spite of the fact that they are the easiest of all to manage. The consonants f, s, z and the diphthongs sh, th, wh, have no vocal qualities at all. Their sounds are separate from those produced by the vocal organs.

This fact suggests the correct treatment of them. They must be made entirely independent of the tones with which they are associated. If one of them occurs at the beginning of a word,

it must be sounded clearly, but before the tone itself is attacked. The attack of the tone must follow instantly after the conclusion of the consonantal sound, so that there shall not be any interval between them.

Conversely, when one of these consonants occurs at the end of a word, the tone should be completed before the consonantal sound is made, but no interval should appear. When one of these sounds appears in the middle of a word, it is impossible to prevent a brief interval in the flow of tone, but the singer should always bear in mind that the consonant is not to be given duration. That quality is reserved for the vowel. The consonant must be made as short as possible. In this way the flow of tone will at least seem to the hearer to be smooth and continuous.

Any endeavor to push forward the

vowel tone before the consonant is out of the way will result in straining. It will, as one writer says, "cause a muscular effort and produce tension in parts of the body, which will rob the vocal sound of beauty and deprive the singer of freedom."

When the singer has acquired a pure and round pronunciation of the vowel sounds and a clear and smooth enunciation of the consonants, he should give no little time to the practice of clear delivery of text. He will soon find that certain combinations bother him more than others. For example, how many public speakers always make a mess of such words as "rests" or "tests."

The combination "sts" is, in nine cases out of ten, transformed into a double s. This is wholly unnecessary. The cause of it is haste. The speaker does not take the time to form the three

consecutive sounds. Now the singer is far more likely to hurry, because he will be anxious to carry his voice forward to the next vowel; but it is entirely unnecessary to do this. The consonantal sounds can be clearly enunciated without checking the flow of tone or destroying the atmosphere of the legato.

Suppose you are singing "Oh, rest in the Lord." The "st" in "rest" must be clearly enunciated or else the beauty of the text and the pathos of the passage will be destroyed. Now, when the cavity of the mouth is in shape for the short "e" in "rest" the tone may be properly prolonged on that vowel, and the "st" taken with the tip of the tongue gently and clearly, leaving the tongue in precisely the right position for the formation of short "i" in the next word.

In the practice of the delivery of text

the singer should note all details of this kind and store them away in his mind for future use. This use should be that of study only. To suppose that a singer in the practice of his art must think always of all the rules is absurd. Study makes him master of the rules. It does not make them master of him. The pianist spends years in acquiring a correct position of the hands and fingers, but when he is playing he does not concentrate his mind on these matters. The violinist studies long and arduously to acquire an automatic command of the positions, but he does not have to centre his thought upon them when he is interpreting Beethoven's concerto.

The singer's technic must in the course of time become automatic. The purpose of long study is to perfect an automatism which shall be absolutely correct. Then the singer can concentrate

his mind on the higher features of technic, such as phrasing, style, dramatic expression. These things, too, are technical. There is a way to phrase and a way not to phrase. There is a way to sing lieder and another way to sing the music of Rossini. There is a way to be purely and nobly dramatic, and there is a way to be a charlatan, appealing to the ears of groundlings.

The earliest masters of vocal art were peremptory in their demands that the text should be clearly delivered. The theories of Peri and Caccini, the leaders of the movement which resulted in the establishment of opera, called for a perfect enunciation. They were engaged in an attempt to reconstruct Italian dramatic music on the lines of the Greek drama, and they laid down as the basic tenet of their creed the law that the music should follow and em-

body the sentiment of the words. To sing such music so that the words would be incomprehensible would have defeated their entire purpose.

But only a few years elapsed before musicians themselves saw that the endless recitative was not the ultimate perfection, nor even the fundamental material of an artistic lyric drama. The need for musical design speedily made itself felt, and the arioso recitative of Monteverde's "Arianna" was but the prelude to the rhythmic aria of Cavalli.

Once the aria, with its inevitable return to the first part, had been established as the solar light of opera, the fidelity to the text soon disappeared, and with it fled the regard for clear and beautiful enunciation. The Italian singers came to hold in high esteem their pure and sonorous vowels, because these furthered the production of good

tones, and at the same time these singers began to slight the consonants simply because they found these sounds in the way and were unable to perceive any great merit in them.

With the development of dramatic music in France the demand for clear enunciation was revived, for the Frenchman had that natural inclination for the theatre which aroused in him a desire to hear the speech of the actors, singing or speaking. This demand reacted upon the Italians, because they sought success in the French capital.

Again, the history of opera in Germany led toward the rehabilitation of clear diction. From the beginning the German loved the "singspiel," the opera with dialogue. He above all men desired to know what was going forward on the stage. He had no use for prolonged dialogues in recitative. He

demanded that they should be in speech, and so they were even in Mozart's "Die Zauberflöte," Beethoven's "Fidelio" and Weber's "Der Freischütz."

The Italian dramatic school of the early nineteenth century was not slow to feel the influence which was spreading over Europe, and Rossini and his contemporaries wrote recitatives and arias of which the text was intended to be heard. It is true that they wrote others in which the words were of no importance, but in Italy as elsewhere the general trend was toward that dramatic verity which demanded that the words should be conveyed to the auditors.

With the full development of the lied of Schubert the imperative necessity for clear enunciation was made apparent to the entire musical world. The

Wagnerian drama cried aloud for such enunciation. The result is that to-day no one questions the claims of the words of vocal music. On the contrary, the demand that they shall be clearly and beautifully enunciated is not to be avoided.

Of all singers in the world those of America sin most consistently in this matter. We have some singers who can enunciate, but the typical American singer cannot sing his own language so that an audience can understand him. Opera in English is a lamentable travesty. This is an unpalatable fact, but it ought not to be disregarded for that reason. On the contrary, every American student of the art of singing ought to give most careful attention to his pronunciation of the vowels and his enunciation of the consonants and aim to acquire a clear, beautiful and dis-

tinguished diction. That experienced teacher Madame Marchesi says:

"Do not fail to go over the text of your songs again and again and penetrate yourselves with their meaning. A singer with a moderately good voice who has mastered the significance of his words will always have the advantage over the possessor of a much finer instrument to whom they are a sealed message. Gounod was wont to say of a singer of the latter type, 'What a beautiful organ pipe!'"

XII

STYLE AND RECITATIVE

THERE are many teachers of style. Some of them appear to believe that style cannot exist without parade. The fact is that the term "style" is too loosely used. It ought to be accepted as signifying appropriateness. The manner of singing Mozart is not the manner of singing Puccini, nor will the manner suitable for Donizetti be found appropriate to the lyric dramas of Wagner.

Manner is not matter. The method of the singer is his matter, and that is always the same. There is only one right way to sing, in so far as the technics of the voice are meant, and that way is right for Scarlatti, for Handel,

for Mozart, for Beethoven and for Wagner. The manner is altogether another thing.

In this department of style tradition plays a leading part, but the warning before given as to the trustworthiness of tradition applies here also. In the course of time the manner of singing, as handed down from teacher to pupil, becomes imperceptibly remodelled. Teachers do not always live a hundred years, after the fashion of Manuel Garcia, and even if they did it may be doubted whether their earliest conceptions would not unconsciously be changed by the progress of three-quarters of a century. Garcia in his last years may firmly have believed that he could reconstruct the manner of singing Mozart which his father brought to America in 1825, but there is room for doubt about it.

The study of style may best be pursued by careful examination of the music to be sung, coupled with thorough and intelligent reading of such contemporaneous writers as may be obtainable. If one reads the comments of the contemporaries of the famous singers of the eighteenth century he will not be in the dark as to the salient traits of their style.

They were invariably praised for the purity and equality of their tone, their breath power, their messa di voce, their portamento, their smooth and beautiful execution of runs and other florid passages and for their trills. We also find that they were not without pathos, but it was the pathos of pure tone and finished phrasing, not that of dramatic declamation.

We read similar comments on the singers of the seventeenth century,

about whom the singers of to-day know absolutely nothing. Yet these vocalists laid the foundations of that Italian skill which made the singing schools of 1700 a landmark in the history of musical art.

From 1700 to the present time the records of singing are writ in large letters. There is no difficulty in learning how Farinelli, Caffarelli, Cuzzoni, Faustina and their contemporaries sang. Neither is it troublesome to learn all about the manner of Malibran, Grisi, Mario, Rubini, Tamburini, Ronconi, Lablache and the others of that generation.

As for the music of the older composers, that is heard in plenty. Of course we do not hear performances of the entire operas, but we are frequently treated to recitatives and arias in the concert room. Furthermore, the op-

eras of Mozart preserve for us the conversational recitative of the Italian opera buffa in its best form, and they also present to us the grand recitative of the opera seria, for in *Donna Anna's* discovery of the identity of her father's assassin we have a dramatic declamation of the highest Italian style.

With some of the Handelian oratorios, too, we have the old eighteenth century style preserved. The recitative preceding "Waft Her, Angels" in "Jephtha" is written in the grand style of the opera seria of the period. It will bear comparison with any recitative in such a work as Lulli's "Armide" or Rameau's "Hyppolite et Aricie."

In the delivery of recitatives there is abundant opportunity for every singer of opera or oratorio to display a knowledge of style. Nevertheless in no de-

partment of singing is greater ignorance of style disclosed. A little retrospect of the field may serve to revive some latent memories. The origin of all recitative must be sought in the stilo parlante or rappresentativo of the Florentine reformers who aimed to resuscitate the Greek drama and to substitute it for the polyphonic choral drama which at that time did inefficient service as festal entertainment. This original recitative was practically a literary, not a musical product. It was a form of intonation, not remotely associated with the ecclesiastic chant which suggested its outline and its style to the youthful adventurers into new fields.

Peri, who was associated with Caccini in the composition of the music of the first lyric drama, and who invariably gets all the glory, wrote a preface to "Euridice." In it he endeavored to ex-

plain his ideas about the proper way to write dramatic music.

He held that the movements of the voice through musical intervals should imitate those of the voice in speech. For calm or reflective passages the recitative should be fluent and smooth and should use only a small range of tone. For more agitated sentiments the intervals should be wider, the range greater and the movement more rapid.

This fundamental thought was easily expanded and ramified, so that the details of recitative soon became more elastic than they were in the hands of the first writers; but the fundamental principle remained the same. The speech was the dominant factor. Musical accent, as such, did not exist in this recitative. The accent and the emphasis were those of the text. There was no rhythm except that of the

words. There was no musical phrasing. The textual phrase alone was observed.

Now let every student of the art of singing note that in three hundred years there has been less change in recitativo secco, the original species of lyric speech, than in any other form of music. What it was in the day of Monteverde, whose "Orfeo" was produced in 1608, it essentially is now. In those days recitativo secco was accompanied by a few chords played on the harpsichord. These chords were sounded between the phrases of the recitative and usually marked a resolution or a cadence in the harmony.

Melodic outline was shunned in this recitative because the musical phrase was not adapted to the parlando style. To permit the entrance of musical form the lyric stanza was needed, and hence until the middle of the seventeenth

century, when the sharp demarcation between recitative and aria was reached, the lyric stanza was little used. Blank verse was the suitable form for the recitativo secco.

Certain idioms crept into the recitativo secco early in its history, and they are still there. Sequences of notes used for the conclusion of phrases of recitative came into existence with the practice of the earliest masters, and they have survived for the simple reason that they cannot be escaped without entering the domain of free melodic composition.

These phrases were built by men seeking to imitate the inflections of the voice in speech, and they can no more be removed from the language of opera and oratorio than the typical inflections of speech can be removed from the spoken drama. These phrases are to be found in the operas of Peri, Carissimi, Han-

del, Scarlatti, Mozart, Rossini, Donizetti, Verdi, Puccini, Weber and Wagner. They are also to be found in the oratorios of Bach, Spohr, Mendelssohn, Haydn, and Sir Edward Elgar.

Now these historical facts lead us to the primary law governing the delivery of recitativo secco. The first thought must be given to the text. The music is altogether a secondary consideration. The singer who examines the notes of a passage of recitativo secco and endeavors to determine how best they may be phrased and emitted is in error from the very outset.

The notes must be examined wholly in the light of the text. The phrasing must be that of the words. The accent must be that of the words. The emphasis must be that of the words. The singer who endeavors to make a cheap vocal effect on a high note in a piece of

recitativo secco will in nine cases out of ten ruin the sense and, therefore, the eloquence of a fine passage.

On the other hand, the singer must not permit himself to regard the delivery of this species of recitative as a purely mechanical achievement. The imagination finds in the field of recitative ample scope for its play. The delivery of recitativo secco calls for histrionic ability, just as that of the dialogue of the spoken drama does.

To give this musical speech vivacity, convincing verisimilitude, poetic beauty, calls for insight, as well as sincerity. As Lamperti pertinently says, "the chief requirement of this vocal style is that the singer's imagination should be fired by the given situation."

Since this is true of recitativo secco, especially in its higher contemporaneous forms, it is still more desirable in

the treatment of recitativo stromentato. This is the more common variety of recitative in the lyric works of to-day. The harpsichord has disappeared from the instrumental force of the opera house. When the voice is supported simply by chords we hear the strings in passages where Mozart would have used the clavier of his day. Since Rossini set the fashion our masters write whole operas without strict secco recitativo. The orchestra accompanies it all.

Wagner is the perfect embodiment of recitativo stromentato, because so much of his operas consists of more or less melodic dialogue, with only occasional flashes of sustained arioso form. The melodic fragment is his principal apparatus, and with it he bears the bulk of his lyric edifice. "Lohengrin" is especially rich in examples of the modern recitativo stromentato coupled with

phrases of the old secco, supported in this opera by orchestral chords. Wagner utilizes cadences which were invented by Peri side by side with elaborate musical speech couched in intervals which would have made the early Italians gasp.

The delivery of recitativo stromentato requires careful preparation. The question for the singer to decide in every instance is how much of the passage before him demands strict tempo and how much calls for the free style of the secco. A mingling of the free and the strict style will be found in nearly all extended passages of recitativo stromentato.

Much here depends upon the composer. The earliest writers were less inexorable in their demands that singers should be bound to the beat of the measure than the moderns are. Their

recitativo stromentato differed but little from their recitativo secco. It was slower in tempo and it had some orchestral phrases scattered through it. Later, in what may, from our point of view, be called the middle period of opera, the stromentato recitative approached nearer to the arioso and the orchestral accompaniment became more varied.

Even here the vocal phrases frequently stood by themselves, and the orchestral passages were placed in the intervals between them, so that the voice part could be sung ad libitum and the orchestral phrase played with similar freedom. This is the most common form of recitativo stromentato. All the modern composers use it, for its application to all possible situations in the lyric drama renders it of universal value.

But the musicians of to-day more frequently compose recitativo stromentato in strict tempo. The orchestral support flows forward in a ceaseless stream of melody, and the voice must enter and finish on the beat. Otherwise confusion is sure to arise. Wagner is insistent in his demand that his recitative be sung precisely as written and in perfect tempo.

To many long passages in the works of Verdi, Puccini and the latter-day Italians and to many also in the lyric productions of the Frenchmen this demand of Wagner applies with great pertinence. What the singer of recitativo stromentato must invariably do is to examine the voice part in all its relations to the accompaniment in order to ascertain just where strict musical requirements exist and just where a liberty approaching that of the secco

may be found. And through it all he must preserve the true conception of recitative, which is speech in song.

At this point the student of singing will ask, "How much of this applies to the treatment of oratorio recitatives? Surely you are not going to lay down the same rules of style for opera and oratorio?" Perhaps the best answer to this is found in a passage in Dr. Spitta's "Life of Bach."

"The recitative was in its origin a dramatic form of art, and its function is to facilitate the presentment of a transitory incident either by narrative or dialogue. Hence the important point is what is said in singing, and not what is sung in the saying; in other words, the meaning conveyed rather than the melody which is engrafted on it. Still it had an eminently musical side, and it must soon have been detected that

with the means at its disposal and an impassioned text it could rise to a high pitch of pathos and impressiveness—nay, all the more so from being devoid of all equalizing uniformity.

"In consequence of this it was, on the other hand, peculiarly fitted to prepare the hearer, by exciting and attuning his attention (musically), for a composition presenting itself in a more complete and symmetrical form [namely, an aria].

"From the former point of view it could have no application in church music, and even in the latter no immediate justification, for it is impossible to say that the self-assertive display of personal passion is appropriate to the church.

"Hence the dramatic factor was set aside in the words, while the composers absorbed the musical element un-

changed into church music. They treated recitative exactly as in opera, as speaking in a singing voice, a kind of chant, with here and there a stronger musical accent, as the poetry admitted."

This is an adequate and safely guiding account of the character and purpose of the earlier recitations; but it is not applicable to those of a later period. Some of the highly dramatic recitations of such works as Mendelssohn's "Elijah" demand vocal style quite as animated and declamatory as those of Saint-Saëns's "Samson et Dalila."

In short, an oratorio singer is bound to have command of all styles of recitative, for this method of speech in song is liberally employed by oratorio composers, who have utilized all its resources and all its varieties, from the most primitive recitativo secco to the

opulent modern recitativo stromentato, or endless vocal melody.

The oratorio singer, however, must never forget the distinction between "dramatic" and "theatric." The oratorio demands unbending dignity of style. It is a pity that the students of singing who aspire to eminence in this department of their art cannot have a course of training in the music of Lulli and Rameau. Though these were French opera composers, their recitatives demand a broad, noble, even pompous style, coupled with a perfect enunciation of the text, and the study of this style would, with a little toning down, provide an excellent preparation for oratorio.

The dignity and breadth of these old recitatives were essentially dramatic, but not theatric, as the recitatives of Italian operas of the eighteenth and

nineteenth centuries so often were. Admirable as many of the improvements of Rossini were, his recitatives too often degenerate into mere points of vocal display, designed wholly for the opera house.

Later Italian writers have followed in the flowery path of vocal dalliance till the purity of a distinguished and invaluable branch of the lyric art has apparently been permanently defiled. For many writers of oratorios in these nervous modern times have adopted the phraseology of the Italian opera, and all the way from Gounod's "Redemption" to Tinel's "St. Franciscus" and thence even to Perosi's "Lazarus" we hear the theatric spoutings of "Semiramide" and "Möse in Egitto."

The singer is to a certain extent helpless when confronted with these passages. He must sing what is written.

But he can preserve his self-respect by sacrificing the opportunities for personal display to a sincere consideration of the text. Let him not forget, even though the composer does, that "the point is what is said in singing, and not what is sung in the saying." This is the essential law of all recitative up to the point at which arioso begins. By keeping it ever in mind a singer is not likely often to go wrong.

The study of recitative style is sadly neglected in these days of eagerness to rush before the public. Teachers of style and repertoire ought to compel their pupils to take thorough instruction in it, for it is one of the fundamentals of vocal interpretation. It is the root from which all our operatic and oratorio singing sprang. For that reason alone it ought to be studied; but that is not the only reason.

It might perhaps be going too far to say that the correct delivery of recitative is the key to all proper interpretation, but it is not too much to declare that without it perfect style is not attainable. In the modern song, for instance, such as the lieder of Strauss and Wolf, the intimacy of text and music is such that only the philosophy of the old recitative can supply the key to a correct analysis of it.

The key to the dialogue of Wagner's "Tristan und Isolde" is the recitative of Mozart and the dramatic scena of Beethoven and Weber, that wonderful compound of recitativo, arioso, cantilena and dramatic bravura. The open sesame to the treasures of Elgar's "Dream of Gerontius" and "Apostles" must be sought in the recitatives of Bach and Handel.

This suggests the advisability of a final

caution. The conception of recitative as speech in song must never so befog the singer's mind as to obscure the fact that it is still song. Recitative is to be sung, not shouted, cackled or barked. Identification of musical accent and emphasis with those of the text does not mean effacement.

The rank heresies of Bayreuth, emanating from the extraordinary mind of Cosima Wagner, and fostered in a score of German theatres from which the art of beautiful singing has for many years been an outcast, have made the Wagnerian drama the hotbed of bad recitative delivery.

Instead of the broad and elastic form of declamation designed by Wagner, a declamation embracing all the elements of musical speech from the cut and dried phrases of the old secco to the splendid eloquence of modern dramatic

arioso, we have a nondescript thing, compounded of brittle, formless staccato and vociferous shouting. This thing should be wiped out of existence. It is neither art nor music.

XIII

THE LYRIC IN STYLE

The study of style in singing cannot stop with attention to recitative. While it is true that the worst offenders are those singers who ruin all the declamatory parts of modern operas by ignorance of the fundamental principles of recitative, there are many more singers who destroy the designed effect of their arias or lieder by incorrect style. The offenders in the department of recitative wander further from the truth, but in pure melodic singing wanderers are more numerous.

This is especially true in these days of song recital. In the opera house certain traditions are respected. Some of the

traditional rules are indisputably good, while others are at least questionable; but on the concert platform every one is a law unto himself. Singers vie with one another in differences of style and interpretation. Madame Cantando sings Strauss after the manner of Milan, and Mademoiselle Chant sings Schumann according to the theory of the Boulevardes, while Frau Singspiel delivers herself of "Caro mio ben" in the manner of Bayreuth.

Each contends that the other is wrong. Each proclaims that hers is the only true and authoritative style. All the world wonders. No one is quite certain of anything, except that there are more ways of singing a song than of cooking a goose. The critics vainly thunder. No one pays any attention to them. The glorified vocalist has her little army of worshippers, and in the religion of

musician worship there is neither conversion nor apostasy.

The question of interpretation may in some cases be debatable. It is not thus in as many instances as the singers would have us believe. Your true artist who cannot sing a certain passage in the right manner without disclosing some defect of voice, is very ingenious in preparing arguments to demonstrate that her wrong way is the true way. Still for the sake of temporary comfort let us assume that there may usually be differences of opinion as to the correct interpretations of songs. Granting that it is so, there is still no room for wide divergence of belief as to style.

Style is general; interpretation is particular. Style is the character of a period or a school or a master. Interpretation is the disclosure of an individuality. Style may embrace all the songs of a

single composer, though it seldom does; but interpretation can apply only to one at a time.

In order to construct a correct style it is essential first to reconstruct the period to which the music before us belongs. When an orchestral conductor endeavors to electrify us by reading Mozart's "Jupiter" symphony as if it had hissed from the burning pen of Tschaikowsky, he commits a radical error. He tries to impart to the composition a character which no composer of Mozart's time conceived. When a singer attempts to make Mozart's arias more "dramatic" by singing them as if they had been written by Puccini, he sins in precisely the same manner.

The first thing a singer must do in studying an aria or a song is to get a correct conception of the content of the work itself. Without that true interpre-

tation is quite impossible. The next thing to do is to examine the music in the light of the period to which it belongs. The final thing is to analyze the music in the light of the known artistic aims of the composer.

To know the period the singer must be acquainted with the history of his art. If one is to sing an aria of Alessandro Scarlatti correctly, he must be familiar with the general conditions of operatic composition in that master's time, with the aims of the composer himself and with the state and resources of the art of singing.

Very few singers know anything about the state of singing in the latter part of the seventeenth century. Fewer still have any knowledge of the progress made in the art in the middle or early part of that century. Yet there is no period in the history of singing so inter-

esting as this one. A very brief glance into it will satisfy the artist that there were vocal giants in those days. The operas of the latter half of the seventeenth century bristled with technical feats. Every singer had to be a vocal acrobat of the highest order. On the other hand, the cantilena of that day demanded exquisite purity of tone, perfect command of messa di voce and portamento, a genuine legato style and great finish in phrasing and nuance.

This period paved the way for that of Handel and Hasse, the period of the extraordinary vocal virtuosi who were graduated from the schools of Pistocchi, Bernacchi, Porpora and their contemporaries. The testimony of those who heard these famous singers is that they sang with a marvellous command of all the resources of the art of bel canto.

They were not specialists. The operas

of their day were not constructed in such a manner as to call for one dramatic and one lyric soprano, one dramatic contralto, one tenor robusto, one barytone and one basso cantante. All the singers were sopranos, contraltos, and tenors, with an occasional bass.

The barytone voice was not used in the opera at all. Male rôles were often sung by men with soprano voices, and in the same opera you will sometimes find a male soprano singing one male part and a female soprano singing another. All the music was in the same style. Every one in an opera was entitled to at least one aria di bravura, and all singers excelled in both sustained melodies and sparkling fiorituri. Technics were at their apogee. It was the golden age of the art of singing.

The singer who takes up an aria of this period must be prepared to give it a

large amount of his time and attention. He must refine and refine till he recalls Kipling's description of Robert Louis Stevenson as a man who made most delicate mosaics in words and filed out to the finish of a hair. There can be no rough spots in a correctly prepared aria of the Handelian time. The cantilena must flow like a broad river, the bravura like a sunlit fountain.

Let no singer fall into the foolish error of supposing that there was no expression in the singing of the Handelian era. All the testimony is to the contrary. We are told of wonderful achievements by Raff, Senesino, Caffarelli and their compeers in moving people to tears. All the contemporary comments speak of the excellence in pathos of this and that artist.

The fact is significant. It is invariably the pathos of the singer that is praised.

No description of tragic fury or majestic wrath is ever found in the accounts of Mancini, and other writers of his time. This, together with the constant insistence on the perfection of vocal technics, should show clearly the correct style of the music these artists sang. The broader sentimental passages were either contemplative or melancholy. In the bravura there was a certain amount of assertiveness, but no such attempts at tragic delineation as we find later in the music of "Norma."

Hence it follows that any singer who endeavors to impart forcible verbal accent to the arias of Handel's day, in the hope of making them more potently dramatic, goes diametrically contrary to the spirit of the music and the correct manner of singing. The textual parts of these arias must be treated smoothly. Clearness of enunciation is

certainly desirable, but it is undeniable that the composers and the singers were but little concerned about it when they came to the ornamental passage work designed wholly for the exhibition of vocal facility.

If the modern singer's conscience troubles him at all about the slaughter of words in these old arias, let him comfort himself by an honest essay to set forth the words so that the hearer can get hold of them at least once. For since these words are sure to be repeated, the singer may perhaps be forgiven if at their second appearance he sacrifices sense to sound. That, apparently, was the practice of the greatest singers the world has ever known.

It is probably quite hopeless to make a plea for the abolition of the cheap and vulgar vibrato in the delivery of these old airs. It is indeed painful to hear

"Caro mio ben" sung with a French opera vibrato, which robs it of half its noble simplicity. It is said that the vibrato was introduced by Rubini. At any rate, it was new to the singers of his day, and had not at that time been heard in the memory of man. There is no account of its use in the writings of the contemporaries of Caffarelli and Farinelli. On the contrary, the master singers of their day are praised for the steadiness of their tones and the perfect smoothness of their style.

It is evident, therefore, that the vibrato is a trick invented after their day. It certainly is quite out of place in the music of their period. But whereas Rubini used the vibrato from time to time for the creation of what he regarded as a dramatic effect, almost every singer of to-day tries from the beginning to acquire a habitual vi-

brato, to be used at all times without regard to fitness.

Some of our singers have so successfully cultivated this trick that they have developed it into a tremolo of generous proportions. It would be interesting to know what Porpora or Fedi would have thought of a twentieth century tremolo, especially when introduced in an aria by Carissimi.

The stages of early vocal style may not inaptly be likened to the three varieties of ancient architecture—Doric, Ionic and Corinthian. The Doric period is that of the founders of opera and oratorio, when vocal composition went no further than recitative and arioso. The Ionic style is that of the operatic masters of the seventeenth century, in which melodic beauty and a limited amount of expression were joined with graceful and opulent exfoliations of

vocal arabesque. The third style is that of the Handelian era, which, like the Corinthian architecture, gathered up all that was best of the other two and added to it a characteristic ornament of its own, thus crowning all with a beauty fashioned by the development of culture.

The old style of architecture contains nothing Gothic. No more does the old style of singing. The change comes after Mozart. To sing Mozart one must sing. He must not shout or declaim or rant. Always he must sing, just as if he were interpreting the music of Handel or Scarlatti. For the recitatives he may utilize a much broader accentuation, but for the arias he must find it possible to introduce the tragic accent without departing from the pure bel canto.

This problem has been successfully solved in our own day by such singers

as Lehmann and Nordica. It can be solved by any singer who has given any attention to what the French call the grand style. In the majestic arias of Rameau and Gluck, even in the rather pompous deliverances of Méhul, Spontini and Cherubini the singer of to-day should seek some of the elements of his Mozart style.

True, they followed Mozart, but they were much closer to him than the Italians ever were. Rameau, building upon the foundations laid by Lulli, determined for all time the character of French dramatic singing. He insisted upon the absorption of the spirit of the text in the treatment of the music. He was the father of that distinguished and elegant diction which is still one of the glories of French lyric art.

No student of singing can afford to neglect a thorough examination of the

French opera in the days of its inception. Let any student of modern Italian opera music take up such a number as the "Enfin est il ma puissance" of Lulli's "Armide," or that beautiful air, "Tristes apprêts pâles flambeaux," in Rameau's "Castor et Pollux," and he will at once perceive wherein the Gallic masters of the elder time attained a certain grandeur of style which their Italian contemporaries never reached.

The Italian music is the more passionate, the more elastic. The French is the more aristocratic. It is just this aristocracy of manner that every student of vocal art must attain in order to add to his style that polish which he can never acquire from a narrow adherence to the field of Italian opera. A singer thoroughly trained in the French grand style and afterward in the German dramatic manner would put to shame

the feeble attempts at Schubert's "Die Allmacht" or Beethoven's "Die Himmel ruhmen," founded wholly on a combination of Italian and Teutonic training.

By an artistic fusing of all the elements of Italian, French and German vocal art, which were defined before the era of Mozart, the singer may at last enter the kingdom of the marvellous boy. He who can adequately sing Mozart is a master-singer. Perhaps nature may have denied him the robustness of voice essential to the latest combinations of solo and orchestra, but their style, at any rate, will hold for him no insuperable difficulties. He can triumphantly paraphrase Monte Cristo rising from the sea and exclaim: "The riches of Mozart! The world is mine!"

The competent singer of Mozart is ready for Rossini, Meyerbeer, Bellini,

Donizetti, Ponchielli, Verdi and the contemporaneous writers. All that is superimposed on the music of Mozart (considered wholly from the point of vocal style) by these writers is a large and frank theatricalism. With Rossini entered the vocal *tour de force*, and with that began the demand for the Big Tone, the curse of to-day's singing.

It is not the growth and development of the modern operatic orchestra that has made the need for the Big Tone. It is the degradation of public taste by a deliberate pandering to vulgar appetite. As Frangçon-Davies has truthfully said, the voices often drown the orchestra, and he asks how we should like to hear actors bellow Shakespeare at us as singers bellow Verdi.

The problem for the opera singer of to-day to solve is how to unite a pure, mellow tone with the highly empha-

sized declamatory style necessary for modern operas. In nine cases out of ten singers overdo the accentuation in the Italian operas of the early nineteenth century. It wearies the ear and insults the intelligence to hear the sempiternal "Addios" turned into "Add-d-d-Dio," so that legato becomes spiccato and the stage is showered with shattered phrases.

This sort of offence in style is the result of a reflex action caused by a mistaken notion about the proper manner of singing the opera of to-day. The singer who seeks for a sure guide to the correct manner of singing contemporaneous opera will find it in the proposition that an appeal to the intelligence of the audience must be made before that to the senses.

Before the Big Tone, for which the shouters of "bravo" are always waiting,

must come the immersion of self in the poetic content of the text, the identification of self with the character. The artist must bear in mind that the lyric drama of to-day rests upon the theory of Wagner, which transformed mere singing into that puissant organic union of melody and word which he called "word tone speech." Communication, not tickling of the ear by sound, is the purpose of the entire lyric art of this era.

The materials for the vocal style of to-day are provided in the works of the earliest Italians, Peri, Caccini and Monteverde, in those of the early Frenchmen, Lulli and Rameau, in those of Gluck, and, finally, in those of Mozart. After Mozart, Beethoven and Weber. But what are "Ocean, thou mighty monster" and "Abscheulicher" but combinations and amplifications of

"Don Ottavio, son morta" and "Non mi dir"?

The foolish assertions of ill-equipped vocalists that Wagner demands a technic and a style not to be acquired from the study of the old masters have been laughed to scorn by the preachings and the practice of such artists as Lehmann, Brandt, Fischer, Ternina, Nordica, Jean de Reszke and a host of others who were trained in the old music.

The bawling of some early Wagnerian singers echoes through the opera houses of Germany to-day simply because the impersonators of Wagner's characters are not singers at all in the true sense of the term. They can no more sing Mozart than they can sing Wagner. If they could sing the former they could sing the latter, and perfect style would be within their reach.

Be not deceived. Singers like Caruso

cultivate the Big Tone quite as industriously as the Germans. The Italians are following the downward path that leads to mere noise.

Of course the public applauds. The public always applauds anything that fills it with astonishment. The acrobatic feat meets with swifter recognition than the finish of exquisite art. On this point Tosi spoke long ago these pithy words: "An audience that applauds what is blamable cannot justify faults by its ignorance; it is the singer's part to set it right."

What a blessing it would be if the lyric artists of to-day would unite in one determined effort to give to the stage the pure and elevated style which ought to be its glory. The public would not be long in discerning its superiority over the popular manner of vocal mouthing.

All that has been said in regard to

operatic art applies with equal pertinence to oratorio and the song. The modern art song is "word tone speech" of the most subtle variety. The singer who would sing lieder well must bury himself in the texture of the tone-poem and reproduce it for his hearers.

If he will do that he will find the correct style; but with too many singers the temptation to sacrifice the contour of the phrase or the sense of the word to the opportunity for some petty piece of vocal display destroys the whole. To this must be added what has been said before in the course of these papers, that the pressing need of covering up some radical defect in vocal technics quite as often works for the destruction of the singer's best effort.

Technic, technic, technic! That comes first. The Corinthian columns must rest on a firm foundation or they will fall,

and great will be the fall thereof. When the foundations are laid, musicianship and cultivated taste must be backed by sound knowledge of periods and individual composers before the study of particular compositions will give the singer insight into the traits of style.

XIV

WAGNER-SINGING

For years one of the most formidable obstacles in the way of an immediate appreciation of the Wagnerian music drama was the atrocious manner in which its music was sung. I am here confronted by a lion in the path, a vicious, snarling lion of evil tradition, fed fat in the mews of Wahnfried itself. The manner in which the music of Wagner has been sung in the past and is still sung by the authority of Bayreuth is fundamentally incorrect; and I hope here and now to establish that truth.

Why does the typical German singer of the music of Wagner bark, cough, or sneeze the notes instead of producing

them in a normal manner? Why is it regarded by so large a part of the German people as absolutely wicked to *sing* the music of Wagner? It is true that there are Germans who do really sing this music, but they are always confronted with wagging heads in their own land. There is believed to be something radically wrong with them because they permit the voice parts of the Wagner music dramas to be revealed in their native beauty. In the benighted country in which I live we listen to such singing with joy. For we have at last come out of the wilderness in which we were aforetime lost, and have learnt that the highest achievement of the old Italian art of singing is the delivery of Wagner's music as he, poor man, dreamed it, but rarely heard it.

Fifteen years ago the writer of this volume was derided, because he had

said that Wagner never intended that his music should be delivered as the German singers of that day were delivering it. He had declared that if what Lilli Lehmann and Emil Fischer did was right (and even the Germans in New York praised them), then what Alvary and Elmblad and others of that sort did was all wrong. In more recent years he was still making the same argument, holding that if Ernst van Dyck was right in his method of singing Wagner, then Jean de Reszke was wrong. Fifteen years ago there was hardly one to agree with me; now every one says, "Why, of course; that's what we always said." Heaven help me, I am no Columbus. I never could make an egg stand upright. But I did read my Wagner, and I knew that the master would have given much if he could have found a Jean de Reszke to in-

troduce his *Parsifal*, and a Ternina or a Nordica to make known his *Isolde*.

The theory of Wagner declamation as held in Germany, and most of all as proclaimed at the present time in Bayreuth, is radically incorrect. It is not Wagner's theory, and even if it were, it is opposed to the laws of vocal interpretation, and must therefore fail to accomplish the purpose for which it is striving. What is that purpose? The interpretation of text by sung tones. It is a plain fact that Wagner threw aside forever the old Italian theory that the text of an opera was merely a peg on which to hang pretty tunes. That is so familiar to the musical world that it need not be discussed here. The Wagnerian theory of music drama included the use of music as a means of expression, and that only. The employment of music as a means of expression made it

absolutely essential that every word of the text should be intelligible to the auditor. For since it was no longer to be the pleasure of the hearer simply to listen to tunes played on voices, as they might be on instruments, but to pay the closest attention to the speech of the actors in order that the significance of a drama might be grasped, it was incumbent on the performer to deliver the text clearly, using the music just as he would the inflections of the voice in speaking to bring out the meaning of the sentences.

From this premise the school of so-called Wagner singers has developed a theory of Wagnerian declamation, which calls for the most clean-cut treatment of the consonants. With this there should be no quarrel, did it not also include such a use of the vowel sounds that the delivery of those pure, sustained mu-

sical tones which constitute song becomes impossible. It is at this point that I find myself compelled to part company with the genuine Bayreuth style of Wagner singing. I do not believe that Wagner wrote the beautiful voice parts of his music dramas with the intention of hearing them cackled in the Bayreuth staccato, as practised by such eminent dispensers with vocal art as Messrs. van Dyck and Kraus.

The reason why I do not believe that this is the right way to sing Wagner is that Wagner said it was not. It has always been my firm opinion that if any man who ever lived knew just what he wished, that man was Richard Wagner. There was nothing for which he wished more fervently than an eloquent delivery of his music, and he knew in what way eloquence was to be attained.

He knew that the first duty was that of the composer. Unless the music was so written that the musical accent should be identical with that of the text, every effort of the singer properly to phrase the music would end only in obscuring the intelligibility of the words. He therefore devoted himself with heart and soul to setting his texts in such a way that the poetic and musical phrasing and accentuation should be organically united.* That being done, it was necessary only that the singer should sing the notes precisely as they were written, without any liberties, and the text could be clearly and poetically enunciated. When he set out to do this in the early part of his career, he had to contend with the indolence of the German singers, to whom recitative

*He did not always succeed. There are more than a few instances of bad declamation in Wagner's works. But these are exceptions to the ruling practice.

had long meant "laisser-aller" in singing. Writing to Liszt on Sept. 8, 1850, he said:

"Nowhere in the score of my 'Lohengrin' have I written above a vocal phrase the word 'recitative'; the singers ought not to know that there are any recitatives in it; on the other hand, I have been so intent upon weighing and indicating the verbal emphasis of the speech so surely and so distinctly, that the singers need only sing the notes, exactly according to their value in the given tempo, in order to get purely by that means the declamatory expression."

This is one of the earliest statements of Wagner's wishes in regard to the manner in which his declamation should be treated. It is all the more significant because in "Tristan und Isolde," the drama in which the worst offences are

committed by singers, the music is purely melodious, and therefore to be governed by the rules of style applicable to that of "Lohengrin." Now, in seeming contrast to the passage quoted, let me adduce another, taken from the essay entitled "A Glance at the German Opera Stage of To-day" (Prose Works, W. Ashton Ellis's translation, Vol. V.):

"My advice to friendly-disposed conductors of opera might therefore be summed up as follows: If you otherwise are good musicians, in opera pay heed to nothing but what is happening on the stage, be it the monologue of a singer, or a general action; let it be your prime endeavor that this scene, so infinitely intensified and spiritualized by association with its music, shall acquire the 'utmost distinctness': if you bring that distinctness about, rest assured that you at like time have found

the proper tempo and correct expression for the orchestra."

Here again we have convincing proof that Wagner did not regard distinctness in the outline of the scene as synonymous with a destruction of beauty of musical movement or loss of melodic contour. On the other hand, he held that the two things were inseparable. On the one hand he urges the singer to sing the notes precisely as they are written, in order that he may, as it were unconsciously, attain the right declamatory effect; and on the other he tells conductors that, by working in perfect harmony with the singer in producing perfect clearness, he will reach the correct movement of the music.

The present theory as to the proper method of singing the declamatory music of Wagner has grown out of a misconception of the way in which he

desired to have the verbal rhythm, the declamatory accent, enforced. He abandoned as unsuited to the musical form which he wished to employ in his dramas the verse forms familiar to the prosody of German as well as English. He could not write his endless melody if he permitted the text to prescribe the rhythm and the sectional divisions of the music. He says himself that in order to escape this mastery of word over musical setting, he adopted the iterative verse, the staff rhyme, which he used exclusively in "The Ring." His purpose in doing this he has made perfectly clear to us. He did it, not that the singer might fall upon the iterated consonant or vowel attacks with all his enunciative force, but that the iterations might make their own rhythmic effect when the singer was strictly attending to his business of singing. It

was taken for granted as a part of Wagner's plan, that the singer of his music should be one who could enunciate. For without a distinct proclamation of the text the whole Wagnerian scheme of an organic union of the arts tributary to the drama must fall to the ground. Read what Wagner himself says about this "Staff Rhyme":

"In Stabreim the kindred speech-roots are fitted to one another in such a way that, just as they sound alike to the physical ear, they also knit like objects into one collective image in which the Feeling may utter its conclusions about them. Their sensuously cognizable resemblance they win either from a kinship of the vowel sounds, especially when these stand open in front, without any initial consonant; or from the sameness of this initial consonant itself, which characterizes the likeness as one

belonging peculiarly to the object; or again, from the sameness of the terminal consonant that closes up the root behind (as an assonance), provided the individualising force of the word lies in that terminal." As illustrations of what he means, Wagner gives the combinations, "Erb' und eigen"; "Immer und ewig"; "Ross und Reiter"; "Froh und frei"; "Hand und Mund"; "Recht und Pflicht."*

Again, "To impart a feeling with utmost plainness, the poet has already ranged his row of words into a musical bar, according to their spoken accents, and has sought by the consonantal Stabreim to bring them to the Feeling's understanding in an easier and more sensuous form; he will still more completely facilitate this understanding, if he takes the vowels of the accented

*"Opera and Drama," Part II, chap. vi.

root-words, as earlier their consonants, and knits them also into such a rhyme as will most definitely open up their understanding to the Feeling. An understanding of the vowel, however, is not based upon its superficial analogy with the rhyming vowel of another root, but, since all the vowels are primarily akin to one another, it is based on the disclosing of this Ur-kinship through giving full value to the vowel's emotional content by means of Musical Tone. The vowel itself is nothing but a tone condensed: its specific manifestation is determined through its turning toward the outer surface of the Feeling's 'body'; which latter—as we have said—displays to the 'eye' of Hearing the mirrored image of the outward object that has acted on it. The object's effect on the body-of-Feeling itself is manifested by the vowel through a direct

utterance of feeling along the nearest path, thus expanding the individuality it has acquired from without into the universality of pure emotion; and this takes place in the Musical Tone."*

It would be impossible to give a fuller explanation of the nature and purpose of the staff rhyme than that found in the first of these extracts, while the second contains one of the finest lessons in the philosophy of singing ever written. I marvel that the so-called disciples of Wagner have the audacity to treat his music as they do in the face of these authoritative words. He begins by telling us that he places a special value on the elementary relationship of all vowel sounds, especially when not preceded by consonants, or, in other words, when most favorably

*"Opera and Drama," Part III, chap. ii., W. Ashton Ellis's translation.

situated for the production by a singer of a pure and vital musical tone. Secondly, he proclaims his belief in the influence of this elementary relationship of the vowel sounds when treated in such a broad vocal style. The vowel sound as delivered to the consciousness of the listener in a pure musical tone becomes an emotional power second to none. It can expand its individuality into "the universality of pure emotion." And this, he tells us, "takes place in the Musical Tone."

But he also tells us that the poet has previously arranged his words in a musical bar "according to their spoken accents." Here we have a full demonstration of the endurance of the principle which he proclaimed when he wrote to Liszt about the manner of singing the recitatives in "Lohengrin." The poet has placed the words in musical

order with due recognition of their accentual value. It now becomes the business of the singer to sing them exactly as they are written, to enunciate the consonants distinctly, but still more to preserve that fundamental emotional power of the pure vowel sound which is only to be conveyed to the hearer as musical tone. And that is the very kernel of the philosophy of singing. It is what the oldest and best Italian teachers taught; it is what the best of those now living teach. It is in accordance with the practice of the greatest living singers, all of whom enunciate distinctly, but without forgetting that the tone is identical with the vowel sound, and that in this fact lies the secret of emotional influence in song.

Two things have combined to obscure these facts about Wagner's theories of

dramatic song. At the time when he first became a recognized power in the operatic world, the singers were all engaged in the performance of works in which music was not a means of expression, but the sole end to be sought. Consequently they devoted their entire vocal skill to the production of a pure and lovely singing tone, without much consideration of the words of the text. Consonants which were found to interfere with the flow of tone were slurred over, or omitted. Vowel sounds which were inconvenient for any particular singer were altered to suit the favorite position of his tongue.

It is not difficult to imagine the struggles of the mere tone-producers of that period, when they were suddenly called upon to enunciate the words of the text, and to treat the opera as a form of poetic drama in which the public was to

find the musical sounds only a means of expression. The result was bad tone formation, untuneful singing, vocal contortions of the most painful sort, and a public convinced that all this was in the nature of the music of Wagner. In the year of grace 1888, when the musical editor of the *New York Times* said that Wagner could be and ought to be sung with the same beauty of style as Donizetti, many estimable persons regarded him with deep sorrow and some kindly pity for his unfortunate condition. Since they have heard Jean de Reszke sing *Tristan*, they have come to think that while he perhaps did not know what he was talking about, Wagner at any rate knew what he was writing. In 1889 I said in the *New York Times:*

"Signor Saccharini might sing the music of *Siegfried* without a single error in method or vocal style, and yet fail to

move an audience as much as Herr Wachsend, who outraged his glottis with every note, and constructed his phrases with the delicacy of a musical blacksmith. But because Herr Wachsend is so fine a dramatic performer, we are not to forget that at every appearance he strews the stage with the *disjecta membra* of the lyric art. Singing is a very important part of the opera, even of the Wagnerian music drama. 'Nothung! Nothung! neidlisches Schwert' can be sung strictly in tune and with the aid of all the resources of the most perfect vocal method, without the sacrifice of one shade of its magnificent dramatic power. And people who pay for the expensive privilege of listening to operatic performances have a perfect right to demand that it shall be."

Time and the man came to demonstrate the truth of these words, derided

as they were at the hour of their appearance by those who now echo them. Singers who possess the real old Italian method, not the false one practised all over Europe by half-trained singers in Wagner's early days, have proved that when Wagner's music is sung with opulent beauty of tone and with a perfect diction, it rises to heights of beauty and eloquence which the first exponents of it never attained. Heinrich Vogl was a true artist in most senses, but his *Tristan* was no such moving interpretation as Jean de Reszke's. Albert Niemann's *Tristan* was marvellous, but its marvel lay chiefly in the triumph of the man's dramatic power over his native inability to deliver Wagner's text to the public as Wagner wrote it. For in the Wagner drama the text consists of words and music welded together into a perfect form of dramatic speech. Niemann

could not sing the music of *Tristan*. We saw him act, and gathered as much of the music as we could from the orchestra. It was magnificent; but it was not Wagner.

The second of the two things which have combined to obscure the truth about Wagner's theory of dramatic singing is the constant publication of false theories loosely thrown together by the German-taught Wagner singers as explanations of their own inability. Mr. Ernst van Dyck, in an interview published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* a few years ago, gave to the public his theory of the proper method of singing the music of Wagner. This theory was no other than that taught at Bayreuth at the present time by the distinguished relict of the composer. Its chief tenet is that in order to convey the illusion of a musical dialogue in the declamatory

voice parts of the Wagner dramas, the legato must be abandoned, the pure fluent, round musical tone set aside, and the consonants delivered with the fullest possible insistence on their value, while the vowel sounds are treated with regard only for their conversational characters, and with none for their availability as tone producers.

How completely false this theory is to the thought of Wagner, is demonstrated by the passages quoted from "Opera and Drama." Its results were most easily observed in the singing of Mr. van Dyck, a consummate dramatic performer. He was wont to deliver the operatic text of Wagner in a hard, brittle staccato, in a dry tone without resonance and almost wholly devoid of singing quality. And German singers, who could not sing properly, have for years been singing Wagner in some way sim-

ilar to this, and declaring that Wagner should not be sung in any other way. Poor Wagner! What would he not have given to hear the memorable performances of "Tristan und Isolde" at the Metropolitan Opera House in the winter of 1898–99! *Isolde*, Lilli Lehmann; *Brangæne*, Marie Brema; *Tristan*, Jean de Reszke; *Kurvenal*, Anton van Rooy; *King Mark*, Edouard de Reszke; *Melot*, Lempriere Pringle; *the Shepherd*, Mr. Meffert, and *the Sailor*, Mr. Meux. An audience of nearly five thousand persons listened to the first matinée performance of the work by this cast; and Marcella Sembrich, with whom I sat through the second act, said to me at the fall of the curtain, "Did you notice how absorbed the people were? Not even a cough was heard! Wonderful!" And this same Marcella Sembrich, the most accomplished colorature singer in the

world since the decline of Madame Patti's exceptional powers, agreed with me that there was only one right way to sing and that way was right for both Rossini and Wagner. And she demonstrated the truth by singing *Eva* in "Die Meistersinger" with ravishing beauty of tone and a perfect embodiment of the character. Lillian Nordica is as great in "Il Trovatore" as she is in "Gotterdämmerung," and Milka Ternina sings the essentially Italian *Tosca* as dramatically as she does *Isolde*. Jean de Reszke sang *Faust* and *Tristan* with equal beauty, and all the great singers of to-day agree that Wagner's music is perfectly singable, and that it is to be sung best by following the old Italian laws of singing.

XV

THE SINGER'S MUSICIANSHIP

Fétis in writing of Garat, the famous French tenor, said: "An air, a duet, according to this great singer, did not consist in a succession of well-performed or even well-expressed phrases; he wanted a plan, a gradual progress, which led to great effects at the proper moment, when the excitement had reached its climax. He was rarely understood when discussing his art, he spoke of the plan of a vocal piece, and musicians themselves were persuaded that his ideas were somewhat exaggerated on this subject; but when he joined example to precept and to demonstrate his theory sang an air with the different colorings which he could give to it, they then com-

prehended how much of reflection and study were necessary to arrive at perfection in an art which at the first view seems destined only to procure enjoyment for the ear."

If this means anything it means that at a time when most singers were fixing their minds upon the perfection of those details which belong entirely to the department of vocal technic, Garat was rising above the surface and surveying the field of song from the point of view of the musician. Fétis indicates that he was a master of style, and that his mastery came from his grasp of the entire form of a vocal number.

This is the secret of ultimate perfection of style. One may have a perfect tone attack, a beautiful legato, a ravishing portamento, a noble messa di voce and an elastic fluency of delivery, yet sing ineffectively. If the singer be-

stows all his thought on the perfection of each phrase as an individual entity he will never sing eloquently, though here and there he may rise to heights of extraordinary beauty.

There must be a plan, as Garcia called it, which is but another word for design. The singer must grasp his aria or his recitative in its entirety, and he must also perceive clearly its relation to all that precedes and all that follows it. Only in this way can he arrive at a proper conception of the delivery of his music, for only thus can he determine the distribution of vocal effects.

Now the correct distribution of vocal effects gives us what we call style; but it gives us something more than that, for upon it depends largely the interpretative eloquence of the singer's delivery. It is impossible to interpret an aria or a lied eloquently if the vocal

effects are out of balance. The style an the interpretation usually go hand in hand. It is not possible, for example, to sing eloquently the recitative of Handel with a Wagnerian style, nor can the music of Mozart be treated in the same manner as that of Richard Strauss.

Correct style and interpretation rest partly upon traditions, but tradition is by no means a trustworthy guide. Traditions are but imperfectly transmitted from generation to generation. Lineal descent in vocal art has provided the great fathers of bel canto with some strange children. No one can make the doughnuts as mother made them; no one can sing Handel and Hasse as Farinelli and Boschi did.

There is a safer ground for style than tradition. That is the ground of musicianship. Singers should belong to the universal brotherhood of musicians, but

as a rule they do not. They are the most obstinately one-sided of all practitioners of musical art. It is known to all who observe the doings of the musical world that the violinists all go to violin recitals, but almost never to piano or song recitals. The pianists all flock to hear the other pianists, and 'cellists turn out only when a noted 'cello virtuoso appears. So the singers go only to hear singers.

One does occasionally see a pianist at an orchestral concert or a violinist at the opera, but the singer never goes to hear anything but singing. That is the rule. The exceptions are few, and they are also notable. Now, this is all wrong. Singers should go to hear all sorts of music in order that they themselves may be thoroughly musical. Neither the poet who never reads prose nor the prose writer who never reads poetry can sound all the depths of his native tongue.

There is not a clarinet player of solo ability who cannot give hints to a singer. There is not a pianist of virtuoso rank who cannot offer him suggestions about dynamics and tone color. But all this is still in the domain of technics. What the singer can get at the orchestral or chamber music concert is an acquaintance with musical architecture. He can gain an insight into the significance of the larger forms and in time acquire a conception of those broader principles of musical design which he ought to know in order to construct the plan of a rôle.

Every singer ought to add to his course of technical study a curriculum of general musical information. First and foremost he ought to acquire some measure of ability to play upon an instrument. Naturally his choice will prefer the piano, for this instrument

can be utilized in the study of his own branch of art. The mistake of most singers is that they never use their pianos for anything else. They learn to strum out accompaniments and there they stop.

This is not enough. The singer should learn to play some piano music. He need not become a virtuoso, for that would demand too much of his intellectual force and of his time; but the broadening of his musical conceptions by intimate personal acquaintance with some forms of melody other than those suited to the voice will prove of incalculable benefit to him. It is a field which should not be neglected, but which usually and altogether too generally is.

The singer should know the principles of musical form. How many of them do? How many of them can analyze the simplest aria and state with the certainty

of absolute knowledge where its phrases begin and end, how many phrases there are in a section, how they are balanced, and how the sections are formed into periods? Yet without such knowledge these singers will not hesitate to prepare an air, arrange their phrasing and their dynamic effects and preen themselves on the musical quality of their plan. It is true that in occasional cases natural dramatic or musical instinct leads such singers along the true path, but in more cases it does not. This is especially likely to be the case when the singer enters an entirely strange field. Some opera singers who have essayed lieder with sorrowful results would have advanced much farther toward the light if they had known the laws of musical design.

The singer should study harmony. Perhaps in the early days of the last

century this might not have been essential, but that time is far behind us. The development of harmony has been more rapid in the last seventy-five years than at any other period in the history of musical art. The harmonic structures of Beethoven and Weber are simple as compared with those of Wagner, and still more so when placed beside those of the contemporaneous school of distortionists. It matters not what we may believe as to the value of such methods of composition as those of the latter-day Frenchmen; we cannot, as practitioners of the art of music, ignore them. We are bound to learn the new things.

The singer of to-day must not be troubled by the strange intervals of Strauss and Debussy. He must know precisely what they are, why they are, and whither they lead. He must have his ear attuned and his intelligence

practised in the modulations of the new idea. What threw the operatic world into confusion on the appearance of Wagner? What made singers say this new music was unsingable? Its demands upon the voice? Nonsense! Its demands upon the singer's musicianship caused the trouble. The old simple diatonic progressions, the stock phraseology of song, were laid aside for a new harmonic diction, and the singers could not intone the unfamiliar intervals.

A knowledge of harmony will enable a singer to understand the new progressions. The emotional restlessness of the contemporaneous style is built largely of postponed resolutions of chords. Let the singer grasp that and he will find that the strange orchestral accompaniments will not throw him off his musical balance.

Every singer ought to be acquainted

with the history of music, and especially of his own branch of the art. Very few know anything about these subjects, but for the development of correctness in style it is essential that the singer should know the general character of the music of a period to which the composition before him belongs, the particular character of the vocal style and technic of that period, and the individual aims and artistic ideals of the composer of the music.

It seems as if this ought to go without saying, but the truth is that while a few intelligent singers are quite ready to admit that the practice of an instrument is a good thing, and some others do not deny that it would be well to know something about harmony, very, very few indeed profess to have read the history of their art.

It is unfortunate that the English

reader is forced to go unsatisfied in the study of the history of vocal art. He can sate himself with histories of opera, oratorio and the song, but the historical consideration of the art of singing has been sadly neglected by English writers.

However, most singers read French, German and Italian, and in these languages they can find information of great value. For the average student who wishes to acquire a bird's eye view of the subject there is nothing better than "Le Chant," by Lemaire and Lavoix. It is a pity that the work is out of print, but copies are still to be had by those who are willing to take the trouble to search for them. A large part of the work is devoted to the technics of singing, but more than a third is historical.

Another admirable book is Hugo Goldschmidt's "Die Italienische Gesangs-

methode des XVII. Jahrhunderts." This is a contemporaneous work, and it makes a careful and complete examination into the vocal technic of the seventeenth century, beginning with the "Nuove Musiche" of Caccini. As the singers of this century developed the method which the great masters of 1700, Pistocchi, Porpora, Redi and the rest, taught to Farinelli, Caffarelli, Cuzzoni, Faustina, Gizziello, Senesino and their contemporaries, it follows that the seventeenth century method is the foundation of all artistic singing.

It is aside from the purpose of this book to furnish a list of works relating to the history of vocal art. Those who desire them will have no difficulty in finding them in French, German and Italian. That any large number of singers or students of singing could be induced to embark upon a serious ex-

amination of the history of their art after reading anything merely giving good reasons why they should do so is altogether too much to expect.

It may seem wholly unnecessary to urge singers to learn vocal sight reading, but those who are acquainted with the astonishing ignorance of a large number of vocalists will know that it is not. It is no foolish jest of the newspapers that many opera singers have to learn their rôles by ear because they cannot read music. Others who can read music have never learned the art of vocal sight reading, and hence are obliged to sit down before a piano and pick out their parts note by note on that instrument, and in this primitive fashion commit them to memory.

Every singer should be a master of vocal sight reading. A page of music should be to him as the page of a novel

is to a reader of language. This branch of the musical art puts the finish to the musicianship of the singer. With a knowledge of form and harmony the sight reader can grasp the music of a vocal score at once. Without any one of these three the vocalist is musically ungrounded and is never certain of his footing.

I may be pardoned at this point for inviting the reader's attention to one singer who has all the qualifications demanded in this chapter. It not infrequently happens that superficial operagoers ask why Madame Sembrich receives so much critical praise in spite of the indisputable fact that she is no longer in the bloom of her years nor the springtime of her voice.

Her exquisite art is entirely lost upon those who have no knowledge of its qualities. The truth is that Madame

Sembrich enjoys a unique superiority by reason of her thorough musicianship. She began her career as a pianist and next became a violinist. She was an accomplished virtuoso on both instruments and learned the fundamental principles of music from the point of view of the instrumental musician. When she discovered that she had a voice she took up the study of singing.

But she was already an excellent musician, and for years she kept up the practice of both piano and violin. Her sight reading is swift and accurate. She knows harmony and modern music does not trouble her. All her singing is instinct with musicianship. Her phrasing is both dramatic and musical. Her feeling for rhythm is exquisite. Her treatment of recitative is that of a singer who has played Beethoven and Chopin,

and who perceives the musical sense wedded to the declamation. Her knowledge of style is perfect.

But enough. The point is that Madame Sembrich is a musician of high scholarship, and this knowledge, added to her fine perceptions and cultivated taste, gives her singing a peculiar and lasting charm for those who value refined and captivating art above the mere physical products of younger and more vigorous throats.

In an experience of years this writer has seen hundreds of singers who ruined their most ambitious attempts through want of the musical knowledge needed to carry out their wishes. He has yet to see the singer who destroyed the precious gift of temperament and voice through excess of scholarship.

Lilli Lehmann says: "When we wish to study a rôle or a song we have first to

master the intellectual content of the work."

Every student of singing should take to heart these words from the greatest tragic soprano of our time. The intellectual content of a vocal work is both literary and musical, and the musical portion consists in melody, harmony and rhythm. The accompaniment, which comprises the harmonic background, is just as important to the student as the voice part. To plan the delivery of an aria, as Garat did, the singer must grasp all that came from the mind of the composer.

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